

English Literature for Secondary Schools
General Editor:—J. H. FOWLER, M.A.

A PERSIAN HERO



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TORONTO

A Persian Hero

Stories from the "Shah Nameh"

With Introduction, Notes, etc., by

Wallace Gandy

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INTRODUCTION.

THESE stories, which are grouped round the Persian hero, Rustem, were collected by a scholar of that land named Firdausi. The writer's real name was Abul Kasim Mansur, but he is best known by his pen-name, which was given to him by the king, for, said he, "Your stories transport the hearers to Paradise" (or "Firdaus" in the Persian) He was born in 941 A.D., and belonged to one of the oldest country families of Persia. Well-educated, he was very fond of tracing the history of his country by means of the valuable documents which, from time to time, had been collected by the kings when the land was at peace. In the days of Mahomet, all such records as could be found were placed in the royal library, and later, about 1000 A.D., the Sultan Mahmud desired a history of Persia to be written so that his own great conquests should be remembered. Accordingly, several poets began to weave the stories into verse

Abul Kasim, then thirty-six years of age, secured a copy of the records and composed a portion of the history. Everyone admired his poetry, and he was invited to the palace

One day it happened that he entered a garden where three men were drinking wine. They were the chief poets of the Sultan, and desired that no one should interrupt their verse-making. Being unwilling to ask him to go away, they made up a plan to shame him out of their presence.

"We are making verses," they said, "and anyone who

can follow in his turn with a suitable line may sit beside us at the wine."

While the stranger was preparing to recline they picked a word to which no rhyme was known in their language, it was "joshun," meaning armour

The first began, taking for his subject a woman of great beauty.

"The light of the moon to thy splendour is weak."

The second followed,

"The rose is eclipsed by the bloom of thy cheek."

The third poet continued,

"Thy eyelashes dart through the folds of the joshun."

And to this our poet at once replied,

"Like the javelin of Giw in the battle with Poshun"
(Atkinson)

So surprised were the three poets that they forgot their unkind thoughts, and asked Kasim to tell them the story of the warriors Giw and Poshun. Afterwards, with kindness, they introduced him to the king, who asked him about his birthplace, Tus Kasim's account of his native city seemed wonderful to Mahmud, who gave Firdausi the task of completing the history, which the other poets were not sorry to give up.

For his work he was to receive sixty thousand gold pieces, to be paid as the poem was written. But Firdausi had long wished to build a wall to protect his city from the river, and he asked that the payment should be delayed till the poem was finished. This was most unfortunate, for, in the meantime, a jealous vizier set to work in a subtle manner.

Now at one stage of the ancient history, the King of Persia changed his religion and became a Fire-worshipper. Firdausi, therefore, when telling the story of this king, gave

the words of the priests and other Fire-worshippers as they came in the story. The vizier recited these lines to Mahmud, and the Sultan was enraged because he thought Firdausi really meant them as his own belief. The poet, hearing of this, tried to explain to the King that they were a part of the story. But Mahmud, being the head of the Mahomedan worship, drove away the aged Firdausi as though he were a heretic.

When the poem was finished, Mahmud ordered the load of gold to be paid, but the false vizier persuaded him to put silver in the place of gold. Firdausi was in a public bath when the elephant-load arrived, and in great anger and disgust he divided the gift between the bath-keepers and the messenger Firdausi, charged with lack of respect to the Sultan, fled to Mazanderan. Everyone was grieved at his misfortune.

Some time after the death of the vizier, Mahmud saw how unfairly he had acted, and to make amends sent to Firdausi a hundred thousand pieces of gold and a robe of honour.

But as the royal message entered the city at one gate, a funeral cortège passed out by another. Firdausi had gone beyond the reach of mortal jealousy and favour alike.

His daughter refused the money ; but his aged sister saw a way of fulfilling the dead poet's desire. She accepted the gift and built the river-wall and a grand market-place to the memory of Firdausi.

THE SHAH NAMEH.

The *Shah Nameh*, or Book of Kings, as Firdausi called his work, takes a high place in the opinion of learned men as an Epic.

After nine hundred years it is still loved by all who speak the Persian language.

It is the only poem written by one man which was accepted at once by a whole country as representing their

national heroes. A poet who flourished just after Firdausi's death, in 1020, seemed to think that anyone not busy must be thinking of the *Shah Nameh*, for he invites one to read his poem with these words :

"But come with old Khayyam and leave the Lot
Of Kaikobad and Kaikhosru forgot.
Let Rustem lay about him as he will,
Or Hatim Tai cry Supper—heed them not.

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultan scarce is known,
And pity Sultan Mahmud on his Throne."

(*Fitz Gerald.*)

Regarded as history, the *Shah Nameh* is merely approximate. to fix the time referred to, it may be said that Kaikobad died about 600 B.C.

The secret of the greatness of Firdausi as a writer of epic poetry is that he tells his story directly, and the present writer desires to maintain this attitude of directness by not offering any judgments upon the heroes whose actions and lives are portrayed in the part of the *Shah Nameh* he has written.

W. G.

PRONUNCIATION OF NAMES.

THE following scheme of pronunciation renders unnecessary the use of a system of accents, etc., throughout the letterpress. It is from that of Sir William Jones, an Oriental scholar.

a - as in <i>mat.</i>	u - as in <i>bull.</i>
á - , , <i>wall</i>	ú - , , <i>rude.</i>
í - , , <i>lily</i>	ai - , , <i>aisle.</i>
í - , , <i>police.</i>	au - , , <i>ou in house.</i>

Afrásiáb.	Kai-khosráu.	Samengán.
Akwán Díw.	Kai-kobád	Sán.
Aúlád.	Kalahoúr.	Sháh Námeh.
Barzú.	Kaloún.	Simorg.
Fírdausi.	Kásim.	Sístán
Gíw.	Khayyám.	Sohráb
Gúdarz.	Mahmúd.	Tehmína.
Hámáverán.	Mansúr	Tús.
Isfendiár.	Mázanderán.	Zábul.
Kábul.	Mínúchehr.	Zál.
Kai-káus.	Narímán.	Zohák.
	Rúdábeh.	

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

*The Baby with White Hair—In the Simorg's Nest—
A Dream and a Gift—Zal Ruling a Province.*

IN the days when great heroes lived in the land of Persia, there was born a baby with hair as white as snow. When his father, San, was told, he was very sad. The nurse said “Sire, your child is a beautiful boy and will grow tall and strong. His cheeks are like spring roses, and he will be as brave as a lion. He is perfect but for his hair, which is silvery white.” San called his nobles together and told them of the white-haired baby, and they said, “We have never seen or heard of such a monstrous thing. It is a child of the demons, and if you are wise you will take it away.” But the mother loved her son, and gave him the name Zal.

San and his soldiers took Zal a long journey and climbed up a high mountain called Elburz. They left the lonely baby on the rocky heights to be eaten by wild beasts and great birds. The tiny child cried in vain for food, there was no one on the cold mountain to hear it or help it.

Next day, a big bird which lived on the mountain was flying about in search of food. The Simorg was

a bird much bigger than a man and instead of twigs to build its nest it used the leafy boughs of trees. He saw the little baby and flew down to him. God sent kindness into the Simorg's breast and he picked up the baby and flew with him to his nest. The young ones in the nest were bigger than Zal and they, too, did not attack him but kept him warm. When the Simorg returned with his prey he tore off the tenderest parts of food for Zal, and, as there was no water or milk, the baby had to drink the blood which drained from the flesh. For several years the boy lived in the Simorg's nest and he grew tall, straight and beautiful, as his nurse had foretold. The wonderful bird taught him to speak as men speak, and he became so bold that he feared nothing in the world.

The hero, San, often thought about the little white-haired boy whom he had treated so cruelly. One night he dreamed a strange dream and his wise men said it meant that Zal was still alive. Soon after this San dreamed that a great army was marching towards him. The leader was a young man of wonderful comeliness. One of the captains spoke to San, telling him that God had blessed the boy. With a scream San awoke from the dream and made up his mind to go to Mount Elburz to see if his son was living. The side of this mountain was very steep, and no one could climb up the rock where the nest was built. San prayed to Heaven to be forgiven, and the Simorg, flying past, heard the sad words of the warriors. Zal was standing

by the edge of the nest, and the Simorg said to him, "I have been as a nurse and a mother to you: but the slayer of lions, San, your father, has come to look for you, and now I must give you back to him." Zal wept to hear this, and wanted to remain with the faithful bird. "That cannot be," said the Simorg. "You must go into the world, although I am almost breaking my heart at parting with you. Do not forget me, for I love you, and if ever you need my help, put one of my feathers on the fire and I will appear to you at once." So saying, the marvellous bird carried Zal down from the eery, and said to San, "Behold your son, he will grace the princes of Persia."

Now the King of Persia at this time was named Minuchehr, and San was his chief warrior.

The king had heard of the journey to Mount Elburz, and was delighted with San's success. The mighty chief and his newly-gained son set out to the court to inform the king of all the wonderful events that had befallen them. A messenger had brought word of their approach, and the king determined to honour his brave visitors. The prince, therefore, selected fifty horsemen of the king's tribe and led them forth to meet San and his company. The prince saluted the chief and the horsemen separated, placing themselves on the outside of the company as a guard of honour. Soon after this a number of men on foot met the procession. One of them carried a glass vessel of sweetmeats, and threw it on the ground in front of San's horse. This

custom was performed for those of kingly rank only ; judge then how much the king loved the family of San.

When the stately cavalcade reached the palace, San presented Zal to the king. Zal kissed the ground at his sovereign's feet, and the king gave to him a mace and a helmet, both made of gold. San related the story of Zal's life, and the wise men reckoned the times of the stars to discover what his fortunes would be. All were agreed that Zal would become a hero of might and wisdom, the foremost of his time.

The king seated San at the side of his throne and gave Zal rich gifts—Arab horses with golden ornaments, strong armour and splendid robes. To San he gave a throne with many precious stones set in the wood, and made him governor over the eastern countries which belonged to Persia.

Many learned men came to the palace of San at Zabul to instruct the young man in the arts and sciences, and the great warrior himself taught him the use of various weapons of war.

One day came a message from the king commanding San to capture the land of Mazanderan, the country of the Demons. San knew that the journey over the steep mountains to the land of the Genii would take many weeks, and accordingly he placed Zal in charge of his dominions. Zal ruled well in his father's absence, and attended to every matter faithfully and carefully. In the meantime he learned the wisdom of his teachers and desired to hear the wise men of other lands.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Princess Rudabeh—The Stars of Rustem—Zal before the King—The Simorg's Feather.

ONE of the most distant lands which paid tribute to San was Kabul, and here Zal pitched his tents. The King of Kabul, Mihrab by name, went beyond the city to do honour to Zal. He asked him to a banquet. But Zal would not accept the invitation for this reason—Mihrab was descended from the Serpent-King, and was of the same family as the Demons against whom San was at that time fighting. Zal said, “I cannot be your guest, since you are a worshipper of idols. But if I can serve you in any other way I gladly will.” That day in the palace Mihrab said of Zal, “There is nowhere on earth a hero to compare with Zal, the White-haired.”

The friends of Zal told him of the Princess Rudabeh and her beauty. “Her form is like polished ivory, her eyes glow like the narcissus. The ravens’ plumes are not darker than her long eye-lashes, and her arched brows resemble the bow drawn back by a strong soldier. Would you see the moon? Gaze upon her face. Her delicate

fingers are as silvēn pencils, and her luxurious ringlets hang, sweet smelling of the fragrant musk, around her ankles."

It was in the springtime, and by the river near Zal's tent the maidens of Rudabeh came gathering roses. Zal, rambling about the meadows, shot a bird, and his servant ran to bring it. Meeting the rose-gatherers the soldier asked who their mistress was, and on his return told Zal. Zal sent two rings to Rudabeh, for he was already in love with her although he had not seen her.

A place of meeting was arranged, and Rudabeh was standing on a balcony as Zal was passing by. She let down her wealth of hair, and fixed it in a ring. Zal, seeing the black tresses shaking in the wind, grasped them, and so climbed up to the balcony.

Now that they saw each other they were more in love than ever, and wished to marry. The same evening, Zal sent for his councillors and told them what had taken place. They replied that no son of San ought to marry a daughter of the Serpent-King's family; but they sent a letter to San, who was fighting Mihrab's friends in Mazanderan.

San assembled his wise men, and they observed the stars to know the fortunes of Zal's marriage with Rudabeh, if it were agreed upon. "Oh mighty San, the stars give you good tidings. Do not oppose the marriage of Zal and this princess, for it will bring good fortune. They shall have a son who shall be the greatest hero in his day. By him

shall the Persians conquer the Tartars and all the world."

San was delighted with the hope of another hero, but sent to Zal this message, "You should not yet think of love! I will not oppose you, but first we must ask King Minuchehr."

The king was greatly disturbed at the talk of marriage between the house of San and his former enemy. San was called to the court to give counsel. The old warrior returned victorious from the war, and the stories of his exploits caused the king to plan the destruction of Mihrab. San was about to tell him of his son's desire, but the king would not hear of peace. In a towering fury he commanded San to lay waste the land of Kabul and to kill Mihrab's family and nobles. San, with downcast face, sadly went to do the king's bidding.

This news reached Kabul, and Zal travelled day and night until he was in his father's presence. San replied to his son's earnest appeal by writing a letter to King Minuchehr. Zal bore the message, and the king treated him with great honour.

In the meantime Mihrab feared greatly that his land would be spoiled. The queen determined to ask San to plead with King Minuchehr. Accordingly she rode on a beautiful horse and took presents of slave girls, trays of jewels, camels, wine, camphor and musk.

For a time San's mind was divided between the king's will and Zal's marriage, but at last he accepted the gift and promised to promote the queen's wishes.

San's letter spoke of his cruelty to the white-haired baby, and asked the king to consider the life and wishes of Zal.

"Your father's letter," the king said, "opens an old wound. Yet I will yield to the hero and you shall have your wish, but I will first speak with my wise men."

The astrologers examined the heavens, and after three days and nights found all the signs favourable to Zal. "From the movements of the stars, Oh King! have we traced the omens concerning the marriage of the son of San with the daughter of Mihrab. We find that their son shall be a great hero. He shall not fear to catch the lion alive. Neither at the feast, nor in the battle shall any man equal him."

The king was pleased with the prediction, and said, "Keep secret these omens till a future day."

One day the king said to his wise men, "Ask Zal some difficult questions. Put his wit to the test."

Four sages gave their riddles for him to answer. The first said, "In the plain are twelve fair trees and each has thirty branches. They grow neither greater nor less."

Another spoke. "I see two splendid steeds, one black as pitch, the other shining clear as diamonds. They run for ever, yet neither gains on the other."

The third riddle was this. "I looked on thirty horsemen as they walked before the king. I

counted them and one was not there. I counted again and there were thirty."

The fourth wise man spoke of a beautiful garden. "I see a strong man with a keen scythe among the grass, the flowers and shrubs. If you ask him to save any he will not listen, but cuts them all down."

Zal pondered these questions a while and then spoke out clearly to the king. "The twelve fair trees in the plain which have each thirty branches and which grow neither greater nor less are the twelve months of the year, each having thirty days neither more nor less.

"The two splendid steeds, of which one is black and the other white, are the night and day. They chase fast but never catch up the one to the other.

"The thirty horsemen whose number seems to lack one but is complete when you look again are the moons of the month. Out of thirty moons we miss one, but it shines the next time we look.

"The beautiful garden with its grass, flowers, and shrubs is the world with its people. The strong man with the keen scythe who, unheeding, cuts down one and all, is Time."

The king and his princes were delighted with Zal's wisdom. The king bade some of his bravest knights to put their armour on, and Zal armed himself to try his skill and strength with the mightiest of them. He rushed upon the warrior, raising a cloud of dust, and suddenly he seized the king's soldier by the girdle and lifted him clean out

of his saddle as lightly as a feather. Everyone cheered, and shouted, "The best warrior the world has seen is Zal!"

And so Zal returned to Rudabeh and San himself was at the marriage, which took place amid great rejoicings at the summer house where the lovers first met.

After a time the child of which such wonderful things had been foretold was born. As the time drew near Rudabeh became so ill that she could neither sleep nor rest. The people said, "The cypress leaf is withering," and Zal and her mother were very anxious, for it was thought she would die.

In his despair Zal remembered the parting gift of the Simorg. He had carried the feather among his treasures, and now he placed it on the wood fire that burnt in a pot of brass. For a moment all became dark, but, immediately, the marvellous bird appeared.

"Why do these tear-drops glisten in the warrior's eye?" said the Simorg. "The prince of mighty men is to be born. Take this nut, grind it with milk and musk and give it to the mother."

The Simorg flew away to his lonely nest, and Zal did as he was told. Rudabeh forgot her pain and fell into a sound sleep. The baby was born, and he was as fair as a garden of flowers. The nurse held him for his mother to see when she awoke. The mother smiled joyfully to see the fine boy, and said, "His name is Rustem." This name means, in their language, "Deliverance."

During that day the baby was fed with the milk of ten nurses, and one would have thought he was at least a year old.

A needlewoman who made pictures with silk threads, worked a portrait of the baby, showing him armed as a warrior, riding a horse. A speedy messenger took the likeness to San, who was once more fighting the Demons of Mazanderan.

The old champion was transported with delight at the good news and the picture. The friends of Zal at both Zabul and Kabul held feasts for many days, and gave large sums of money to the poor, in honour of the baby Rustem.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Wonderful Child—The White Elephant—Attacking Mount Sipend—The Salt Merchants—Regaining the Treasure.

RUSTEM was an astonishment to all who knew him. He soon outgrew his cradle and learned to walk. He was fond of playing with his father's golden mace. When three years old, he learned to ride on horseback and began to handle the bow and arrow. Of bread and meat he ate at a meal as much as a man's share, and when he was five years old five men's portions were not too much to set before him. In wrestling he excelled very early, and by the time he was ten he beat even the heroes in all the warlike sports. His grandfathers, San and Mihrab, wished to see the beloved child. Mihrab, with his army for an escort, arrived first, so he and Zal proceeded to meet San, taking the boy riding upon an elephant and wearing a richly worked crown. They alighted when San was seen in the distance, and made the rest of the journey on foot. San was astounded to see the size and beauty of the boy, and gave him his blessing. He commanded his soldiers to build a great tent, and a royal feast was

held. All the tents were decorated with costly ornaments, wine was brought, and dancing girls with lutes made the time pass in the merriest manner.

San seated Mihrab on his right and Zal on his left, and Rustem stood before him, and said, "The champion of the world is San. Thou art the root of the tree of heroes of which I am a branch."

Mihrab, however, became boastful as he drank the wine, and began to sing the praises of the Serpent King. Then San remembered the tyrant's wicked deeds, and silently he prayed that Rustem should grow fair, brave, and active in good works, and in the fear of God.

After the feast, Zal took Rustem to a castle in Sistan, which was one of the districts under his rule. Now King Minucheehr kept his white elephant here, and one night the huge beast broke its chain and rushed wildly through the city.

Rustem was asleep, and the shrieking of the people awoke him. He sprang up and asked a man-servant the cause of the noise. Taking up his father's iron mace, he was about to run forth when a servant said, "I cannot let you go in the darkness to face the raging beast alone."

But Rustem, impatient at this stoppage, struck the man, who fell dead, his head rolling on the floor. The others ran away, so there was no one to unlock the great gates. Swinging the mace he smashed the lock and burst the bars, and sallied out to quiet the beast, which rushed upon him at full speed. Trumpeting loudly and raising his huge

trunk in the air, the terrible animal was just about to strike the boy when Rustem shouted and struck one well-timed blow with the club. The elephant reeled, staggered, and rolled over on its side lifeless.

Rustem placed the mace—which was bent double with the forceful blow—upon his shoulder, and went back to his sleep.

The next day Zal returned to the castle, and was told how Rustem had killed the mad elephant with one blow. He thanked God for his safety and kissed his brave son.

“ You are a mere child,” he said, “ yet your equal in courage or strength cannot be found. As you slew the gigantic beast single-handed, you could perhaps undertake a journey of which I will tell you.”

Rustem was most pleased to hear his father’s praise and to know how he trusted his bravery, and was very happy to have a task which promised him some wild adventure and, perhaps, glory.

“ Many years ago,” continued Zal, “ the king sent my grandfather, Nariman, with a large army to capture an enchanted fortress. It is built on the steep summit of Mount Sipend, which is several miles high. A wall as strong as the mountain itself surrounds the fort, and within the space are fruitful gardens, shady trees, and abundant springs. By reason of this plenty, the soldiers of the fortress can live through the longest siege. The one thing they are obliged to purchase from travellers is salt : of that they have none. In the centre of the

fortress stands a strong tower full of untold treasures.

“My grandfather had laid siege to it for a year, when one of the besieged men hurled a huge rock which struck him on the head and killed him. This came to the ears of San, who set out to avenge his father. For years and years he sought the mountain, but could not find the path in the trackless sand.

“Now, my son, it falls to you to avenge my grandfather. You are an unknown warrior, and, should you once pass through the gates of the fort, I doubt not that you will succeed in performing the task which was given to Nariman, and your victory will comfort San in his old age.”

“I will destroy the garrison out and out,” said Rustem gleefully.

“I see your heart is stout,” replied Zal. “But you must enter by a stratagem.”

“By what plan, then,” said Rustem, “am I to gain an entrance, since you say it would be useless to beat with my club upon the walls?”

“I said,” continued his father, “that salt is scarce with the guard in the fortress. The hero should not disdain the finer arts of war or neglect what foresight may prevent. You must disguise yourself in the garb of a camel-driver, and pretend you are a merchant carrying to them loads of salt for the purposes of trade. A number of your chosen companions—wise, brave, and discreet—must do likewise. Take suitable weapons hidden among

the loads, and do not remove any of the salt until every one of the seeming travellers is within the walls."

A string of camels with their loads of the precious mineral was prepared by Zal, while Rustem chose his soldiers and instructed them as to the expedition. Never before or since has so wonderful a company of camel-drivers set out from the market-place of Sistan.

The watchman at the gate of the fortress could see far over the yellow ring of desert land, and sent a message to the Prince. "A caravan draws near our mountain. The camels are furnished alike, and I should suppose we shall be able shortly to fill our jars with fresh salt."

Thereupon the Prince sent a messenger, who ran like the wind to ask what cargo the camels were carrying.

"Return to your master," answered Rustem, "and say that we shall refresh you with salt."

When the Prince heard the message of the master of the caravan, he commanded the gates to be opened and the camel-drivers entered. Before trading, they rested, and their camels knelt down to recover from the fatigue of so steep an ascent. Rustem was received by the Prince in the Bazaar, and soon men, women, and children were bargaining for their rare merchandise. So eager to buy were they that some gave gold-worked cloth, and others gold and silver. All this time no one feared.

At dusk Rustem led his camel hastily to the

castle of the Prince, and at this sign all the camel-drivers left bartering salt for goods and joined their master.

When the soldiers saw this movement, they fancied that all was not well with them. The chief sprang up to meet Rustem. At once Rustem took his club from the remains of the load of salt and cleft the head of the Prince. His warriors by this time had armed themselves and were fighting the attacking soldiers. The darkness was lit by the flash of a thousand swords, and by morning light there was seen not one of the enemy to oppose them.

Rustem found the high tower in the middle of the fort, which his father had said contained the treasure. The outer door was made of strongest iron, but this Rustem broke open with his battle axe. Inside the castle was an amazing temple, built with a skill not possessed by man. And from the floor to the vaulted roof were packets of pearls, dotted amidst heaps of shining pieces of gold. Of this wealth each warrior took his requirements, and Rustem sent a messenger to Zal asking what he should do next.

Zal replied, "In Paradise henceforth the soul of Nariman shines with the splendour of the deed of Rustem." Regarding the treasure he said, "Your messenger leads two thousand camels, upon which you must load all the treasure they can carry. This done, raze the fort to the ground."

Besides the treasures mentioned were gold chains,

sparkling girdles, costly bracelets and anklets, and of cloths there were magnificent brocades with gold and silver threads, from the distant land of China.

Rustem overthrew every stone, and then returned to his father and mother. Zal honoured him before the eyes of all the people, and Rudabeh, his mother, pressed Rustem to her bosom and kissed him with tenderness and pride.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Tartars over-run Persia—Rustum chooses a War-horse—He finds King Kaikobad—Rustum defeats Afrasiab.

MANY troubles befell Persia in the years of Rustem's early manhood. The great and wise King Minuchehr, feeling his end drawing nigh, warned his son to rule with justice. "When the enemy invade," he went on, "send for the help of San, and Zal, and the young branch of that sturdy tree. And now, my son, the Caravan which calls to-day at this, and to-morrow at that city, each in its appointed turn, will call at last for me, and I must go out upon the last journey."

But the new king paid no heed to old laws, and the country rose in anger against his tyranny. They even asked San to become the king. "I am faithful to my dead master, Minuchehr," replied the hoary warrior.

The King of the Tartars had long wished to capture Persia, and he thought the present time a good opportunity. The new king, remembering his father's dying words, asked counsel of San, who told him, "Keep in mind your great ancestors, and rule

after their laws." Soon afterwards the great hero breathed his last.

There was a fierce prince of Tartary named Afrasiab, who greatly desired to attack Persia. Gathering an army numerous enough to darken the desert, he marched on the unhappy country. The brass drums on the backs of elephants were beaten with horrifying loudness as the troops set out. The Persians met them bravely, but suffered serious defeat. Zal joined with Mihrab and met the Tartar host, but Rustem was ill with small-pox. A chief of the Tartars grasped his battle-axe and struck a blow which stripped the mail from Zal's body. Zal leaped off his horse, seized the club of San, and with the fury of a dragon drove it through the Tartar's skull, staining the drab field with bright red. Zal mounted and pursued the flying soldiers. A second chief came up. Zal raised his mace, but when he would have struck, his enemy had fled from the field.

Zal protected the dead king's young sons from the cruelty of Afrasiab, and drove the tyrant away. In a few years Afrasiab returned to Persia, and the nobles sent to Zal. "We have no king or leader in battle. Why do not you help us against these Tartars?" He replied, "There is but one enemy I fear, and he has visited me, I grow too old to fight in battle. But, praised be Heaven, the tender branch has become hardy."

Zal sent for Rustem to place him in command of the army. "My son," he said, "you are young, and

it is but right you should stay at home to enjoy games and feasts. I cannot send you to face the dreadful Tartars, whose breath is fiery for vengeance."

"Sire," replied the youth, "'tis true, as thou sayest, I am young. I was younger when I took the mountain fort, and perchance the white elephant is by this time forgotten. I want not the softness of the palace or the safety of the garden or the music of the song. I ask for a war-horse, and a club worthy my powerful arm then give me the battlefield and the opposing champion."

Zal shewed Rustem all his horses. He placed his hand on the back of each horse and pressed it down until it nearly touched the ground. At last a new herd came from India to Zal's farm, and among them was a mare with a foal much larger than herself. "Do not touch the mare," said the herdsman. "She has killed many who would have taken the foal from her side."

Rustem made a noose on his lasso and threw it round the neck of the colt. The fierce mare snorted savagely and ran at Rustem showing her sharp teeth. He shouted so loud at her that she stopped before him, and, at a blow from his fist, she rolled over in the dust, and scampered away. The colt was saffron-coloured, with red spots. Its bright eyes could be seen even in the night-time. Its hoofs were as hard as steel. Rustem tried to bend the colt's back, but he stood firm as a rock. "This is the horse for me!" he cried. "What will you take in exchange for him?" he asked the herdsman.

"We call the horse 'Rustem's Raksh,' and if you are Rustem, he is yours to mount to fight for Persia."

There never was a swifter and more obedient horse than Raksh. With the greatest care, Zal taught Rustem the art of the warrior, and accordingly he was gratified to see the progress the youth had made. Rustem now requested a club, for, said he, "The warriors' maces are but willow twigs in my hand."

It happened that the mace of San was in the apartment, and Rustem's eyes shone bright as he took it up. When the dweller in a barren plain would make himself a boat, he trudges to the river when the floods subside. He drags the bed until perchance he finds a solid log. Then with fire and burning stones he hollows out his craft. Such a trunk, hard, unsmoothed, gigantic, was the club of San. Nariman's son with this had slain or tamed a thousand furious beasts, and was the terror of the Tartars in his day.

Rustem wielded the tree with ease, and the time passed all too slowly before he could use it on the battlefield.

In a few days Rustem marched at the head of the army against Afrasiab, and Zal waited for his messengers before joining them. Now Afrasiab had been heard to say, "The son is a mere child, and the father is very old: I shall easily conquer Persia." Zal knew the meaning of this boast, and wished there was a royal youth to place upon the

throne. He sent trusty horsemen through the length and breadth of the land to find the sons of the king. One brought word that Prince Kaikobad, a youth of wisdom and valour, was in hiding on Mount Elburz.

Zal spoke to the chiefs, "If we had a king, there would be union in our army." And he gave them the news. They agreed to ask Kaikobad to take the crown, and Rustem went alone to invite the royal youth to command the army.

The Tartar soldiers gasped with fear when Raksh bounded along the roads, and such as were rash enough to try to stop him were trampled down or struck by the ponderous club.

At the foot of the mountain Rustem saw a palace in a beautiful garden by a flowery stream. Seated on a throne near a fountain was a fair young man surrounded by noble youths. They asked him to stay and feast with them, but Rustem answered, "Persia is a land of sorrow, over-run with enemies, and without a king. I go to Mount Elburz."

They asked whom he sought, and he replied, "Kaikobad, the royal prince."

"We will give you tidings of him, if you will tell us how you know his name."

Rustem then dismounted and told them his errand, and the fair youth gave his real name; he was Kaikobad.

The dancing-girls amused them during the banquet, after which Kaikobad told Rustem of his dream.

"I dreamt that two white falcons flew from Persia, carrying a crown, and they placed it on my head. And it is because of this dream that I descended from my mountain fastness and prepared the banquet and assembled this noble company to meet you."

Rustem saw that the falcons were Zal and himself, and he urged the young king to hasten to the waiting army. They rode night and day, meeting many companies of the Tartars.

A fierce leader named Kaloun challenged their advance. Kaikobad wanted to fight him singly, but Rustem would not hear of it. Setting spur to Raksh, he charged the Tartar host. He seized a soldier from his saddle, and, swinging him in the air as if he were a club, he struck another with the man. Kaloun thought he was a Demon using a club, and attacked him with a spear. The leather strap of Rustem's armour was cut, but he reached out his arm, caught the spear, pulled it out of Kaloun's grasp, and with it knocked him to the ground. Raksh caught the fierce glow of the fight and trampled the Tartar chief's bones. When his soldiers saw this they fled.

Rustem now turned aside into a grassy meadow, and during the night they rode on until they met Zal.

The nobles held council for a week, and then Kaikobad was crowned King of Persia.

The Persian army was arranged like the five on a domino, Rustem being in front and Zal behind

with the king. Mihrab, the father of Rudabeh, was also there with the troops of Kabul.

The constant tread of feet, the neighing of steeds, the blacksmiths' anvils, the shrieks of armourers' wheels, the clang of brassy drums, the trumpeting of elephants, the very earth seemed like a solid cloud, so full of motion

Rustem begged Zal to point out Afrasiab to him. "My son," said Zal, "seek not to fight this mountain dragon. His banner is black, and black is his harness. His eyes alone are seen, so encased in iron is he. On his arm is an iron badge, and the crest of his helmet is black."

Rustem bravely answered, "I will drag him to the king, his face in the dust"

And he set spurs to Raksh and shouted along the line of Tartars

"Who is this demon?" asked Afrasiab, and was told, "Does he not wield the club of San? He is Rustem, the son of Zal."

Afrasiab galloped to the front, and when Rustem saw him he lowered his club and caught him by the girdle to drag him away. But the gilded leather snapped, and the Tartar nobles rescued their prince.

Rustem, however, had snatched his golden crown, but when he saw how Afrasiab had escaped, he bit his hand in annoyance. The battle followed fierce. Afrasiab darted across the desert home, like lightning, but Rustem slew both men and horses as a housewife slices cucumbers

"No man," said Afrasiab to the Tartar king,

“can stand before Rustem. He lifted me up so that you would say I had but a fly’s weight. Make peace, O king, to save our land.”

Knowing this was a brave man’s advice, the king sent a message to the King of Persia sung for peace. Kaikobad replied, “You brought about the war, if you repent, I do not thirst for strife. But your son, Afrasiab, must take his oath never to cross our borders again.”

Rustem, Zal, Mihrab and the other heroes were honoured by the king, and the country enjoyed a lasting period of peace and prosperity.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A covetous king—Zal describes the Genii—The White Genius captures the Persians—Rustum to the rescue.

As long as Kaikobad sat on the ivory throne Persia grew in greatness, so that his son Kaikous had not known warfare. After a time he departed from the wisdom of his father and spent his riches in feasting. Rustem was high in honour, being the captain of all the armies. The king gave him a taj, or golden crown, and he had the right of sitting on a throne of gold. There was a feast at the king's palace, when a Demon, passing as a minstrel, came to the gate and said to the porter, "I am a sweet-voiced singer come from the land of the Genii. If the king heard my songs he would give me a place among his musicians."

This was the beginning of trouble for Persia. The king sent for the minstrel and gave him a harp and he sang praises of the land of Mazanderan, in this manner :

"Mazanderan is the home of beauty; the bulbul sings in every tree; on every lawn roses, tulips, hyacinths blow: no nipping frost or scorching heat blasts or withers the garden's pride. The streams

are sweet as distilled rose. The air gives health and life to all who breathe. No man is happy unless within its borders."

Kaikous, shifting in his seat at this wonderful account, turned to his warriors, upbraiding them.

"We feast and sing, but our fathers were warriors! Put away this idleness and let us surpass our ancestors in glory! Surely we can subdue the land of the Genii!"

There were no cowards before the king, yet their hearts failed at this ill-considered speech. The veterans hoped the king would decide on peace, but his mind was fixed. To each other they said, "Never before did Satan cause this madness to come upon a king." They sent to Zal an urgent message saying, "If you delay your advice to the king, the good work of San, yourself, and Rustem will be cast to the winds like the ash of a palm-wood fire."

The messenger rode to Sistan on a swift dromedary, and Zal reflected upon the message. "Kaikous had his throne without a struggle, and in his folly thinks himself greater than his father. Nay! greater than the king whom the very birds obeyed, for even he feared the Demons!"

He hastened to the court, and the king, thinking he had come to take part in the expedition, asked how he was, for he was now very old, and how Rustem fared.

Zal spoke, "O king, I hear rumours of plans to fight the Genii. Oh! that I could sponge away such thoughts from the royal mind, and show the

dangers brave men fear in these untrodden lands ! No strength, no skill, or bribes will buy success against the Demons' charms. Our swords cannot pierce, or our clubs so much as mark their enchanted bodies. Think, O king, of Minuchehr and Kaikobad : and divide the reckless from the brave."

In his pride, the king asserted he was superior to all those kings who had not thought of capturing Mazanderan, and Zal at length asked the king his commands.

" I," he said, " will wage the dreadful war. You and Rustem shall remain to guard the kingdom. I shall amuse myself with the severed heads of these Demons."

Zal replied, " We are the slaves of the king and do his bidding. May Heaven protect thee and give thee no cause to remember my words of warning ! "

So he returned to Sistan with a heavy heart, as the king ordered the army to prepare.

At daybreak, the keys of the treasure house were handed over to a safe guardian and he was told to attack no enemy unless Zal and Rustem, who was called 'The champion of the world,' agreed. The army set out.

On the borders of Mazanderan, Kaikous pitched his tents, and a great feast was held through the night. Next day he commanded a captain as follows. " Choose two thousand men who wave the clubs most boldly. Go before the army and beat down the walls of Mazanderan. Slay all.

Burn down the city. I will put an end to these magicians."

It was done. The captain found the streets full of beautiful women wearing rich chains, costly jewels and embroidered stuff. The merchants were wealthy, the treasure tower full: and on the hillsides were many cattle. He reported these things to the king, then he made the fruitful land a desolate place.

Now the guardian of the land of the Genii was a powerful magician called the White Genius. He lived in a mountain cavern. When the King of Mazanderan heard what the Persians had done he called the White Genius to help him, sending this message:

"The Persians spread our cities on the ground and are destroying us utterly. There will be nothing left unless you help us at once."

The Magician replied, "Do not be alarmed at these Persians. I will deal with them."

The King of the Persians pitched his camp near the city of the magicians, intending to attack it the next day. That night a terrible cloud came on the camp, and in the pitchy blackness great hailstones fell upon the Persian soldiers. Thousands were slain, many ran away, and in the morning none of the remainder could see, for they were blinded.

After seven days of this misery, they heard the roar of the White Genius and thought it was thunder. "O king! thou art like a stricken tree with neither fruit nor flower. Thou hast slain many of my people, but see what thy folly has brought to

thee. Was there no wise friend to warn thee?" The blind king wept when he thought of Zal's wise words to him.

Twelve thousand Genii then placed the Persian army in safe prisons and gave them very little food. But the king sent a warrior to Zal the white-haired. When Zal heard the story he ground his teeth and said to Rustem, "The king must be set free from the Demon's bonds. Unsheathe the sword. Saddle Raksh. Go without delay. I am old, yet but for my feebleness I would ride with you. Take San's club: it dealt death to many a Demon when San himself, mounted on the spirited animal Soham, fought them. Now the burden of this rescue is upon you alone, and yours the immortal glory."

"It is six months since the king set out," said Rustem: "is there no shorter way?"

"There is," said Zal. "High mountains rise between us and them, the home of unnumbered lions, dragons, and Demons. The shorter way is a two weeks' march, while the king's path was full of pleasantness."

"I choose the shorter path," he said. "No wise man of old willingly ran into the jaws of death. Nor am I tired of life that I should rush into the tiger's den. Yet, trusting in Heaven, I accept the perils of the path."

The next day he arrayed himself in his warrior's trappings and mounted his wonderful and intelligent horse Raksh. By his saddle, his grandfather's club hung at one side and at the other hand was his

lasso. This was made of cords of leather twisted tightly and having a noose at the end. In using the lasso he would swing the end round his head several times until the knotted cords separated. Then, paying it out, as one releases the string of a flying kite, he would hurl it with stunning force at the head or legs of man or beast. Once entangled in the cords, escape was impossible.

His shield bore no crest, and his sword and spear also were unadorned. Through his girdle was thrust a broad-bladed dagger. His only ornament was his helmet. This was of steel, richly inlaid with gold, and from the dome extended a fluted spine. Over this waved in the wind a scarlet plume of horsehair.

So Rustem departed to rescue the king from his dark prison, and to restore his crown and treasures. He had every hope of victory, but his going was a cause of sorrow to his mother Rudabeh.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Seven Adventures of Rustem—The Lion—The Waterless Tract—The Dragon—The Witch.

So heavy was the load of Rustem's armour that he carried no food, but trusted to his arrows to provide game by the way. Raksh made good speed until evening, and a double journey was performed the first day. They had reached a forest at the foot of the mountains, and Rustem, hungry and weary, longed for food and rest. In this forest lived a herd of wild asses, and, seeing one, he pressed his knees tightly into the flanks of Raksh. The obedient creature chased the ass at full speed, and soon Rustem caught it in the noose.

He lit a fire in the dry grass with sparks that showered from a flint as he struck it with the steel spear point, and piled a heap of twigs and boughs upon the blaze. The hungry man quickly stripped the ass of its skin and set the meat to roast.

After eating the whole of the roasted beast, he let Raksh loose to browse on the juicy grass, and prepared to sleep. Among the reeds he found a sheltered spot, and, first placing his sword under his head, lay down in the wilderness.

A lion had his den amid those reeds. As the fire died away the lion returned and saw a huge man lying in its lair and a great horse standing near by.

"I will kill the horse first," said the lion to himself, "for the man cannot run away from me."

The lion then attacked Raksh fiercely. But the horse sprang at the beast, crashing its head with its stony hoofs. Then, turning round, Raksh fixed his teeth in the lion's back and tore pieces of flesh from its body. Rustem hearing the dying roar of the lion awoke and saw Raksh wild-eyed, snorting over the prostrate monster.

"Why did you not neigh loudly in my ear?" he said to Raksh. "You were not wise to fight this beast alone. How should I carry my helmet, battleaxe, sword and bow, lasso, club and shield to far Mazanderan if you were slain? So go to sleep and fight no more lions."

Now came the most dangerous part of Rustem's journey. He had to pass through a waterless desert of burning sand. No sign of life could be seen, even the birds refusing to fly over the parched region. The rays of the sun beat down fiercely upon him, and at last he was unable to ride any farther, for he could not sit up in the saddle. He flung himself off the back of Raksh and held to the saddle with one hand, while he leaned on his spear with the other. Overpowered at last, he lay down in the yellow fire. He thought of King Kaikous and the Persian army, and prayed God to bless him

and find a way of restoring his strength. His tongue was dry as leather, and his throat parched with thirst. In this condition he saw a ram run past. Gathering all his strength he stood up, caught the bridle of Raksh and followed the ram, holding his sword ready.

The animal led the way to a running fountain in the side of a rock, and here the travellers quenched their thirst. Rustem devoutly thanked God, and turning to the ram he said,

“Thou hast saved Rustem: without thee he had died and the wolves had buried him. May the grass of the meadow and the desert ever be green for thee, and his bow broken who shall hunt thee.”

Thus refreshed he looked round for something to eat. Seeing another gor, or wild ass, he caught it, roasted it, and ate it eagerly. After bathing in the spring he thought of sleeping. Raksh was grazing and Rustem called him.

“This night keep from quarrelling. Fight neither the lion nor the Demon. But if an enemy does appear, sound a loud warning to me.”

Rustem now slept and Raksh cropped the herbs of the field.

But the place of the burning sand was the track of a dragon and this spring was its sleeping place.

The dragon-serpent was so terrible that no beast, whether elephant or lion, or even demons, dared pass its den. When it saw the man and a horse it was enraged and attacked the horse at once.

Raksh remembered Rustem’s angry words, and

ran to his side, neighed loudly and beat the earth. When Rustem awoke he looked round, but the dragon had disappeared, and the tired hero slept again.

Once more the serpent appeared out of the black distance. Once more Raksh ran to wake his master. Rustem peered through the blanket of darkness in which the dragon was hid, but thought there was no reason for such strange behaviour. He then scolded Raksh: "Why do you wake me when I need sleep so much? I told you I would protect you against a foe, but you call me for nothing. If you do so again I will cut off your head, and in the morning I will drag my armour to Mazanderan by myself."

Raksh now determined not to leave the side of Rustem, for he was cut to the heart by his master's anger.

The dragon again approached, and Raksh could not allow the hero to sleep in danger. Again he neighed and tore up the earth. Angrily Rustem sprang to his feet and grasped his sword. But a light at that instant made the dragon visible. Rustem rushed upon the monster and a shattering shock resounded from the barren walls of the mountain.

"Who are you?" said the hero. "I will know your name before I rend you."

The dragon replied, "This desert is my abode, and not even the eagles dare to fly across it. Who are you, bold and foolish man?"

"I am Rustem, the son of Zal of the White-hair, and there is nothing to make me afraid."

At this the dragon attacked Rustem, and Raksh, no longer afraid, leapt on to the scaly back, and with steely teeth tore away the dragon's hide. Rustem was so astonished at his brave horse that he almost forgot to cut off the dragon's head.

The two retired from the blood-stained rocks and Rustem washed in the rill, saying a prayer of thanks.

"If Thou protect me, what have I to fear from lions, or demons, or the burning thirst?"

Rapidly they left the dragon's track, and for a whole day rushed over a wide plain.

Towards sunset they were in the land of the magicians, and rode towards a beautiful spot covered with grass and trees, among which wound a clear stream.

What was Rustem's surprise to find, in a pleasant glade, a supper already prepared! It was a freshly-roasted deer, with bread and salt by the side, and also a tray of sweetmeats.

Springing from Raksh he sat down to eat the deer when it suddenly vanished. It was the meal of a company of Genii who had hastily departed as he approached. In its place there came a flagon of red wine, a wine cup, and a tambourine. Taking up the tambourine he played and sang a song about his own adventures.

"I purge the land of the wicked. No pleasure I take in the feast. The banquet and red wine for

others, but I shall be found in the war, with monsters and demons beside me, slain with my terrible club."

Now a witch lived near, and hearing the song and music she made herself into a fair damsel and sat down beside him. She was, he reflected, the first human being he had met on this extraordinary journey. He poured out a cup of wine and handed it to her in welcome, thanking God for leading him to the place. But at the sound of the sacred name the witch lost her charms and became as black as charcoal.

When he saw this, Rustem threw his noose around her and exclaimed, "Take your own shape and tell me your name."

Then the sorceress became a wrinkled hag, and Rustem with his sword cut the Demon in two.

The next day's journey was through the Land of Darkness. There the sun was not seen, neither the moon nor stars. Rustem could not see the path, or so much as his hand before him. He therefore gave Raksh his liberty to go at his own speed, and trusted to the sense of his faithful steed for his safety.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Rustem's Seven Adventures—The Pastures—The Guide—Setting free the King—Restoring his Sight.

THE good horse did not carry his master into any danger, and at length a beautiful landscape dawned on their sight and refreshed their spirits. Fruitful trees waved their branches in the winds, and the bright sun tinged the ripening corn to a ruddy gold. The journey had been very tiring, and, although it was not evening, Rustem prepared to rest. Raksh wandered over the fields cropping the pasture, while Rustem, arranging his shield as a pillow, lay down and slept.

The horse enjoyed the corn, but when the keeper of the fields observed Raksh, and the damage he had done to the crop, he was very angry. Seeing Rustem asleep he ran to him, and with his staff struck the unknown champion a heavy blow on the soles of his feet.

The hero awoke, and the keeper demanded, “Thou son of the Evil One, why dost thou allow thy horse to trample the corn?”

Enraged by this treatment, Rustem seized the man, and without a word snatched off his ears and threw them on the ground.

The terrified man dropped the staff, picked up his ears, and ran to his master. The Prince who owned this land was named Aulad, and he had invited his nobles to go hunting with him that day. When the assembly saw the keeper stumbling towards them covered with blood, they listened to his story.

“Behold! a man, the son of the Evil One, has come into our land. He is dressed in a tiger-skin, cuirass, and an iron helmet, and is as fierce as a lion. I was driving his charger out of the cornfields when he ran at me and pulled my ears off, and lay down to sleep again as if nothing had disturbed him.”

Aulad immediately called his fighting men together, and they rode to the meadows.

Rustem saw them, and, mounted on Raksh, waited in readiness.

Aulad angrily shouted to him. “What name do you bear? I would not disgrace my arms by conflict with the low-born! Why are you in my country? Why did you tear off the keeper’s ears and let your horse spoil the corn?”

“If I tell you my name,” said Rustem, “your heart will stand still and shrink in your bosom.”

Aulad gave orders for his troops to seize Rustem, and at the same moment the hero fastened his lasso to the pommel of his saddle and drew his sword. The leader was quickly slain, and, in spite of their furious attack, many of the soldiers were strewed lifeless in the grassy field as a flock of doves by the whirling eagle.

In a short time, the only enemy left unwounded

on the field was Aulad himself. Rustem did not kill him, but, following quickly upon Raksh, he threw the lasso and caught him in the noose, and pulled him off his horse. After binding his arms to his side, Rustem said to Aulad, "If you will speak the truth unmixed with lies, and guide me to the caves where the White Genius and his warriors dwell, and show me also the prison of King Kous, I will place you on the throne of Mazanderan. I myself will give you that prize. But if you deceive me your blood shall pay the penalty."

"Pray cease your anger," replied Aulad. "It shall be as you say. I will show you where the Persian king is imprisoned, and the cavern of the White Genius. A stony wilderness must first be crossed, so rocky that the agile deer avoids the barren land. Then a broad stream impedes our way, and on its banks are Demon warriors guarding the road to Mazanderan. The White Demon dwells in a bottomless cave between two mountains, and in two hundred caverns his people live. Twelve thousand Demons watch by night on the brow of the mountains, to guard the stronghold of the chief.

"I wonder at your rashness, for truly he is a terrible foe. I have seen to-day the strength of your hand, the keenness of your sword, and the crashing club; and by a throw of your lasso I was securely caught—yet what avails all this wondrous power against the White Genius? Should you kill him, there are still countless Demons, with not one coward in their array. They lead the battle with

two hundred mighty elephants of war. You are a man of flesh and blood, but if you were of steel you could not prevail."

Rustem smiled upon Aulad. "Show me but the way," said he, "and you shall see what can be done by one man who derives his power from Heaven. Take me first to the king's prison."

Aulad ran in front and Rustem followed, mounted on Raksh. The whole day and night they ran, until they rested in the fields on the slope of Mount Asprus, where Kaikous was captured.

Suddenly, at nightfall, a tremendous noise clove the clouds and on all sides fires burst forth and lamps were lit.

"What is the meaning of these drums and beacons?" asked Rustem.

Aulad replied, "Mazanderan lies there before us. I should say that the White Demon's chiefs are gathered there. Perhaps the great Genius, Arzang, who captured your king, is present."

Rustem next bound Aulad to a tree, and they slept the night.

At daybreak next day, Rustem arose and hung his grandfather's club to his saddle-bow, and donned helmet and cuirass. He rode towards the camp of the Demons, and, as soon as he saw their tents, he raised so awful a battle-cry that you would have said the very mountains were splitting. Arzang, the foremost of the Demon warriors, sprang up and wondered what human being it was that dared to approach his tent. Angrily he rushed outside.

Rustem spurred his steed, which bounded on towards the Genius. He caught Arzang in a trice, and seizing his gigantic head tore it off from his shoulders. Then, whirling his arm, he flung the head, dripping with blood, into the midst of a number of soldiers, who by this time had mounted their horses. When the Genii saw the rolling head of their chief and the club of San, which they remembered of old, they broke their ranks and fear caused a terrible confusion, in which many a father trampled his own son in trying to escape the fury of Rustem. The champion pursued them with his sword until hundreds were slain, and the rest dispersed to the mountains. He now returned quickly to the tree, and unloosed Aulad and told him of the battle. He then commanded his guide to lead the way to the king's prison. Aulad ran before Raksh into the city of Mazanderan.

It happened that, on entering the city, Raksh neighed with a voice like thunder, and in his prison Kaikous heard him. The royal captive understood what had occurred, and said to his fellow-prisoners, "I can hear the voice of Raksh. Now our troubles are at an end. Thus he neighed when Kaikobad defeated the Scythians."

No one replied to the king, but to each other they said, "Poor king! his afflictions have turned him mad: or at best he is dreaming. How can help come to us?"

But Rustem was soon within the prison, and the blind king embraced his deliverer. All the chiefs

were delighted to touch Rustem and to stroke Raksh once more, and for some time everyone listened to the story of the exploit, in admiration and gratitude.

Then Kaikous spoke to Rustem, "The news of Arzang's death will speedily be carried to the White Genius, and he will surround himself with his warriors. If you would deliver us from the spells and charms which bind our vision with the blanket of darkness, you must go before he hears of your progress."

Kaikous continued, "The journey is four hundred miles, and the path beset with hardship. Straight on lies the land of Seven Mountains, and one by one you must gain them from the Genii. Much need will there be of your cow-headed battleaxe and the ponderous mace of the mighty San. Keep Raksh concealed from the sight of the magicians. At last you will see the most terrible cavern in the world. There is the home of the White Genius and his body-guard. Destroy him and we shall be saved. You will then be able to restore sight to your suffering king and his warriors; for, so the wise physicians tell me, our misery can be cured only by dropping into our eyes three drops of blood fresh from the White Demon's heart. Go, with God's blessing, and save your king"

Rustem told his friends to be on the alert with their arms ready, and, calling Aulad, rode on as before to the land of the Seven Mountains.

When he saw the numerous Genii on the watch

and the awful figures which peopled the caves, he said to Aulad, "The time is come to fight."

"Not yet," said the faithful guide, "for at the height of the sun it is their custom to sleep. Then but a few remain awake to watch the camp."

Accordingly Rustem waited and rested till the heat of the day, when he bound Aulad hand and foot to a tree, and, drawing his sword, rushed into the midst of the sleeping Demons, lopping off the arms, legs, and heads of all he came to. The fearful cries and the horrible sight of slaughter terrified those whom the noise awakened, and they fled from the fury of the champion before whom no one could stand.

Then he came to that dismal cavern, the home of the White Genius. Awhile he stood at the brink of the cave, vainly peering within and rubbing his eyes to sharpen his vision. "Surely," thought he, "no one would willingly choose so hopeless a place of battle, from which there can be no escape." Gradually he discerned a gigantic figure lying across the floor of the yawning hole. Great horns projected from its head. its body was almost covered with hair: its closed eyelids shone vermillion: its flesh, where it could be seen, was of a palsied white.

This monster was the master Demon—the White Genius.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Fight with the White Genius—Scattering the Magicians—The Trial of Hand-Grips—The Rock.

RUSTEM, sword in hand, was resolved what to do. Refusing to attack a single sleeper, he shouted loud his battle-cry, and broke the Demon's slumber. The White Genius instantly arose, and, seizing a huge mill-stone, thus addressed the hero: "Life is sweet to the wise. Why darest thou then seek death in the confines of my land? Who art thou, that I destroy not a thing of no account?"

The Champion replied in a voice like a second clap of thunder, "I am Rustem, sent by Zal, my father, to the enemy of San, my ancestor. I come to revenge thy outrage on the Persian king."

There was only one name in all the world at which this Demon quaked, and he writhed like the lowly snake at the sound of San. Then, recovering, he poised the ponderous rock and hurled it at Rustem, who sprang rearwards to avoid the blow. As the Genius scowled, a quiver ran through Rustem's nerves; but he closed in upon his assailant, and pierced his leg with his glinting sword.

With a dexterous turn he severed the limb above the knee. On his remaining foot the Genius sprang and grappled with Rustem. From side to side they rocked, shaking the mountains as an elephant shakes his stable. Each tore the other's flesh, and rushing gore stained the ground. "If I see to-morrow's sun," said Rustem to himself, "truly I shall live for ever!" Whereas the Demon muttered, "Even if I could escape from this mountain dragon, I could never again lead the Demons of Mazanderan!"

They both increased in fury, and streams of sweat and blood poured at each endeavour.

Rustem, catching the Genius round the waist, exerted all his strength, lifted him up and dashed him to the ground with such a crash as drove the spirit from the Demon's body. Like a flash he drew his dagger and plunged it into the heart of his foe, and tore it from his breast. A mighty groan ascended from the mountain side, for thousands of Demons expired as if they had been a part of the White Genius.

The victor ran out of the fearful place, took off his armour, and, in a spring near by, washed his face and body of the unholy stains, and rendered thanks to God for the victory.

Next he put on his armour and released Aulad, giving him the White Demon's heart to carry. On their way to the king, Aulad reminded Rustem of his promise. "On my body you can see the marks of your lasso: I beg you to keep your word, as is fitting in a hero."

The hero replied, "I will make you King of Mazanderan, but the task I entered upon is not yet complete. This land must be rid of its evil ones: they must be utterly destroyed. Then will I do all that I promised you."

On reaching the king, Rustem related the story of his terrible adventures, and, taking up the great heart of the White Genius, squeezed drops of blood into the king's eyes and those of his warriors. At the first touch of the magician's blood, their sight was restored, and once more the world seemed a place of beauty after it had been like a grave. The sovereign now ascended his throne and held council with his chiefs. For seven days they feasted, Rustem having the seat at the king's right hand. On the eighth day every man saw to his weapons, and the army set out to purge the world of the enchanters. Many cities were burnt, and the blood of many Demons crimsoned the meadows. At length Kaikous said, "Let us now withhold our hands. I will send a letter to the King of Mazanderan."

Accordingly the following letter was taken by a chief named Ferbad: "Where now is the glory of the Magicians? God has brought down the might of the White Genius and his legion. Come, therefore, pay tribute and do homage to us. Else, remember Arzang, and ponder the end of the White Genius."

The King of Mazanderan was disturbed by this insulting message, and, after three days, returned

answer by Ferbad: "Shall the salt water be esteemed as wine? Shall I descend my throne at your bidding? Get ready for battle. I shall swoop down on Persia with destruction, so that no one shall discover your cities among the waste."

Ferbad delivered the letter, saying, "This proud man defies the king" Rustem was sent for, and when the king gave him the news, every hair on his body stood up like a spear. "I will take a letter as sharp as a sword, and its words shall be as thunder"

The king was delighted with Rustem's readiness. A writer prepared a reed, and, with a point like the dart of an arrow, wrote. "A royal person should be a man of wisdom, and no foolish messages should bear his seal. Abandon your stupid pride and obey my commands. If you do not consent, I will darken your land from sea to sea with my soldiers. Your head shall hang on your fortress, and the soul of the White Genius shall rise and beckon the vultures to feed on your brains."

Rustem fastened his club to his saddle and rode away with the letter.

The King of Mazanderan was informed that another ambassador was approaching, and he sent a company of warriors to meet him. Rustem, observing that they were enemies, thought to show his strength. He selected a large wayside tree, and pulled it out of the ground by the roots. He swung it to and fro as if it were a spear, and then threw it in front of the enemy. To display his own

power, one of the chiefs rode up to Rustem and offered to grip his hand. Rustem smiled while the warrior squeezed with all his might. In his turn he pressed so hard that the bones crunched and the veins burst, and the chief fell to the ground in a faint. The king, hearing of his chief's discomfiture, commanded his champion, one Kalahour, to go and punish the Persian Hero. Rustem winced as he felt the pain of Kalahour's grip, but that champion's finger nails dropped off like leaves in autumn, and the blood started from his body by reason of Rustem's pressure. The abashed chief rode back and said to the king, "O king, this man is a lion. We cannot fight him. It will be best to give him the tribute and keep the peace."

The king, however, was angry and grieved, but it could not be avoided; and, as Rustem rode forward at that moment, he was invited to the monarch's right hand. He tried to convince the king that resistance was useless, but his face overclouded with rage as he read the letter.

"Go back to your master," he said, "with this message: 'Let the King of Persia not claim the land of Mazanderan. Be satisfied with what is your own. Otherwise you court disaster!'"

Rustem refused the king's offer of robes, horses, and gold, and rode back in the greatest anger.

"Prepare for battle," he said to Kaikous; "and regard these warriors as of small importance."

The King of the Magicians assembled his hundred elephants and his thousands of horsemen

and foot soldiers, and advanced to the borders of Persia.

King Kous commanded the centre of his line of battle, and in front of the Persians stood Rustem.

A noble of Mazanderan, carrying a huge mace, came before the Persian army and challenged them to single combat, but none replied. Kaikous said: "Now, ye warriors, are you grown dumb by reason of the Demon?"

Still none answered, but Rustem asked leave to attack the champion.

Setting spurs to Raksh, he rode forward and cried, "Your name shall be crossed off the list of the living. You shall pay the penalty for your wickedness."

The warrior bravely replied, but when he heard the war-cry, "I am Rustem," he turned and fled, the hero following him with extended spear. Rustem pierced his armour where the coat of mail and belt meet, lifted him out of the saddle on the lance end, and dropped him on the ground.

This was the beginning of a very fierce fight, which for seven days could not be decided either way. Club rang on shield, falchion sharpened on falchion, sparks glittered like lightning; and voices of Demons, men, horses, elephants, vultures, rent the air like near thunder: but God withheld the victory. On the eighth day, Kaikous took off his crown and bowed down to the earth to pray. "O Lord God, Whom the Persians fear, give us, I pray Thee, the battle over the Genii who fear Thee not."

Wearing his helmet, he took command of the army, and Rustem led the charge on the enemy's centre, making straight for the King of Mazanderan amidst his warriors and elephants. The king lost heart when he beheld Rustem's spear, and would have fled. Rustem roared at him and struck him with his lance, and expected to see him fall to the ground. But, by magic charms, the king became a rock, and Rustem and his Persian friends stood still, astonished at the unwonted sight. King Kous, seeing that the battle had ceased, came up to see into the cause.

"Sire," replied Rustem, "I charged a man who has become a rock and is now safe from my javelin."

"Draw the rock before my throne," said Kous; but no one could stir it. Rustem came to it, and by himself lifted up the huge rock and took it before the king.

"Cease from thy magic device and take thy true form, or with my mace I will break thee into dust," said the hero; upon which the rock yielded the form of the king, clad in a steel helmet and a coat of mail. Rustem caught him by the arm, and Kous sent for the executioner to dispose of him.

So ended the war. The spoil was divided among the soldiers, and the king spent seven days in thanksgiving. Next he gave alms to the needy, sitting in the throne the whole day, for seven days.

Then began a great feast, and before the eyes of

all he thanked Rustem, by whose courage and might he had regained his throne.

Rustem remembered Aulad and said, "O king, the honours you would heap upon me should cover my guide, Aulad, who always led me right. Make him, I beseech you, the King of Mazanderan." And the king placed the crown on Aulad's head.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

*Royal Presents to Rustem—Kaikous again in Trouble
—Catching Rustem Alive!—A Flying Machine
—Hunting.*

THE next day the Persians joyfully returned, and the king, sitting on his throne, placed Rustem at his side.

The hero, weary of warfare, said, "My lord, allow me to go to Zabul to my father Zal, the White-haired."

The king ordered presents to be brought before Rustem. Many and costly, they included a throne decorated with turquoises and rams' heads, a jewelled crown like the king's, a brocade robe worked in gold, and a bracelet and chain of gold: a hundred beautiful maidens richly dressed and wearing golden girdles, and a hundred youths, handsome and smelling of musk: a hundred horses with gold and silver trapplings, and a hundred mules picked from the herds for their black hair, and laden with cloth of gold from the Eastern lands. Next were laid at Rustem's feet—a hundred bags of gold pieces, a cup set with rubies and full of the precious musk, and a turquoise goblet full of sweet attar of roses. The final gift

was a letter written on pages of silk in ink of wine, aloes, and juniper, mingled with the black of lamps.

In this letter the King of Kings made Rustem the ruler of the southern lands.

As Rustem departed, Kous blessed him : " May you live while the stars are in the heavens ! May all the great of the earth be your friends ! And in your heart may tenderness and modesty ever remain ! "

Rustem bowed prostrate before the king, and kissed the throne ; and so he set out to revisit Zal and Rudabeh.

Kous at this time made a progress through his dominions, and during his journey stayed a month with Rustem, after which his attention was directed to the land of Hamaveran. He subdued the rebellious king, and, hearing of his beautiful daughter, married her. The father, however, laid plans to regain his daughter and invited Kous to a feast. In spite of his bride's warning, he went, and every night beautiful dancing girls beguiled the time. Once, however, instead of damsels, warriors marched in, and made the astonished Kous a prisoner. Meanwhile the Tartar prince, Afrasiab, had collected his men ; and, while the Persian king was a captive, he over-ran the land. A body of fugitives told Rustem what had happened and he sent a letter to Hamaveran demanding that the king should be set free, and recalling the fate of the White Genius. Although Hamaveran was afraid, he returned this answer : " If Rustem would like to be cast into prison, the sooner he comes the better ! "

Thereupon, Rustem set out, and in time liberated Kous, and took tribute from three conquered sovereigns. Afrasiab was still harrying the land, and Rustem threatened him in a letter. The Tartar, wishful to be rid of Rustem, proclaimed to his warriors that to any one who brought him in alive, he would give his daughter in marriage. Many valorous knights essayed the terrible task, but in the end Afrasiab himself had much ado to escape being caught alive by Rustem, and after many fruitless attacks hastily withdrew his Tartar troops, leaving Kous safely on an unmenaced throne.

Kous now turned to the arts of peace. He ruled well and secured justice throughout his uttermost regions. Upon Rustem he conferred the glorious title of "Champion of the World." He desired to live at ease, and commanded the Demons whom Rustem had conquered to build two palaces on Mount Elburz. These were made on the grandest scale, and, decorated with countless gems, they would seem to you as bright by night as by day. Satan, ever ready to use a man's vanity to his own purposes, persuaded the Demons to help in the destruction of Kous. One of them in the garb of a household servant one day gave the king a bouquet. After kissing the ground, he said, "Thou art the greatest king the world has known. Thy majesty fills the earth. All beneath the sky own thy sway. Demons and men obey thy voice. Yet thou canst not fly!"

"It still remains unknown to thee how the stars

go through the space above , how the sun unfolds his light , how the moon shoots down her gliding beams , how the day turns with the night, and what, and who, directs and causes the varied motions of the heavens."

Artfully was the song uttered, and, although happy before, Kous was ill content to know he had not the command of the air as well as the earth. He now dismissed his warriors and questioned the astrologers, who at last devised a plan of satisfying the king's desires.

By some means the bird-hunters robbed an eagle's nest, and reared the young ones on the best of food until they grew to an enormous strength. The carpenters contrived a frame-work of wood of aloes carrying a seat, and at each of the four corners a javelin was set upright. An eagle was bound to each corner of the frame-work, and Kous, with a wine goblet in his hand, waited in his seat until the birds were hungry. Then the attendants placed a piece of fresh goat's flesh on the spike of each javelin. The birds waved their wide-spread pinions in an attempt to rise to the meat. Quickly the throne and frame-work were lifted into the air, and the eagles pursuing the rising food, Kous was able to discover what lay beyond the clouds. His ministers saw him disappear high and far away, and sent their slave-Demons to search for him.

At length the tired birds abandoned the chase, and down fell the whole construction in a distant desert. Kous, hurt, hungry, alone, and despairing, had much

time to reflect upon his vanity before he was found by the band of Demons.

When Rustem heard of this occurrence he blamed the king for lack of sense, that he should so often imperil his life. He set out with a sturdy friend, Gudarz, who, when the king was found, told the monarch that he deserved the mad-house more than the throne.

The king determined not to pry again into the mysteries of the sky, and acknowledged his foolishness with tears. For forty days his shame was so great that he shut himself in his palace and refused to hold the court until, by that time, he had recovered his spirits.

During a feast, Rustem, Gudarz and six other champions, made up a plan of sporting in Afrasiab's hunting ground. Afrasiab heard of their intention, and offered a great prize to any who would capture Rustem, whom he hated because he had so often spoiled his plans to take the throne of Persia. "Have I not a warrior to win my crown and throne, which I will give to the victor?" he said. The huntsmen soon saw that their sport was not to be merely with deer or wild asses, for many of the Tartars attacked them, but with no avail. Champions came forward, but none returned. "Fly," said Rustem to Raksh, at the end of the day, and pursued Afrasiab with the lasso. For a moment the Tartar king was caught, but by chance he slipped away. This was the third time he was defeated by Rustem and narrowly escaped.

It befel that another day Rustem was hunting

near Tartary. He smiled to see the wild asses, and some he shot with arrows and others he caught in the lasso. Lighting a fire of bramble wood and trees, and trimming a young tree for a spit, he roasted one of these onagers. He feasted on the juicy flesh and broke the bones for their marrow, and, while Raksh grazed, he slept.

Now, seven Tartar warriors chanced that way, and seeing Raksh, attempted to capture him. When Raksh saw the circling cords he rushed like a lion at the men and, with two blows of his forefeet, struck two dead, and bit off the head of the third. But the other four succeeded in entangling him and they led him to the town.

By and by Rustem awoke and missed his horse. When he saw the traces of his hoofs, Rustem was convinced that Raksh had been captured and became very angry. "How shall I carry all my armour?" said he; "the Tartars will laugh and say, 'This is Rustem's Raksh; we stole him while his master slept,' and I shall be shamed in the mouth of the meanest coward."

He traced the path to Samengan. When the king of this town saw him approaching he set out on foot to do Rustem honour.

The champion offered a reward, but the king asked him to be his guest awhile, for it was impossible for any one to keep Raksh hidden for long, since all the world knew of him.

Rustem believed the king's words and spent some days in the palace.

The King of Samengan invited his warriors to the feast; and China's wine-cups, the cheerful song, and the beautiful dancers charmed away all sadness. The weary champion was given a couch such as would be prepared for a king; it was scented with rose and musk. Now Princess Tehmina, the king's daughter, had heard of Rustem's prowess in the wars with the Tartars and against the Demons, as well as his fearlessness against the dragon, and for long she had loved him, but kept the secret of her heart. When she knew that he was hunting near the palace, she sent spies to capture Raksh; and now that Rustem himself was her father's guest, she was exceedingly happy.

As Rustem was brave, good, and strong, so she was beautiful. Her face was clear and bright as the moon: the light of heaven glowed in her eyes: as she stood, she resembled the cypress tree, her waving curls, her arching eye-brows, her pearly teeth, and the gems in her eyes were charms such as never were equalled.

One evening when the feast was over she went to Rustem, a slave girl holding the lamp before her.

Rustem admired her and said, "Who art thou, fair vision?" He scarcely believed that such beauty was real; but Tehmina answered softly, "I am the king's daughter, and thou, Rustem, art the first man excepting my royal father, to whom I have spoken. I know thy worth, thy courage, and thy might. The very eagles fly away when they see thy gleaming sword. Fear not the loss of Raksh, thy fiery steed;

he shall be restored to thee. Samengan will keep my word."

Rustem was amazed at her beauty, and begged the king to consent to their marriage. The king told Tehmina of Rustem's request, and she answered, "Years ago I heard of the matchless fame of Rustem and vowed to God I would marry none but him. I thank Heaven for directing him hither and so fulfilling my desires."

The king was delighted to unite his daughter with the renowned Champion of the World, and the marriage took place without delay according to the custom of that country. The whole city rejoiced for many days, and both old and young celebrated the praises of beauty and of bravery.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Sohrab and Tehmina—Afrasiab's Plan—The White Fort—A Woman Warrior.

A MESSENGER came to hasten Rustem's return to Persia. At the time of departure Rustem took from his arm a bracelet of onyx, endowed with magic power. "If it please Heaven to give you a daughter," said he to his wife, "fasten this among her ringlets. It will bring her joy and honour. But should you have a son, he must wear it on his arm as I have done. It will give him virtue and the strength of San."

But Tehmina was weeping bitterly, for she loved Rustem.

Now Raksh had been found, and the king brought him to Rustem, who was overjoyed to see his faithful steed. He at once fitted the reins and girthed the saddle, and was soon on his way to Sistan.

On the bracelet was marked the seal of Rustem. It was the Simorg, which of old had rescued the white-haired Zal on the bleak heights of Mount Elburz. Nor did Rustem cease to think of his wife; he sent her costly gifts, among which were three wedges of gold and three flashing rubies.

In time a boy was born, and Tehmina's sadness was consoled. Sohrab, so she called him, grew as Rustem had foretold. When he was a month old you would have said he was at least a year. His limbs grew strong, his chest broadened, and his body tapered to the hips, in short, he had all the signs of enormous strength. He soon wearied of the soft cushion of the nursery. He was an athlete, a hunter, and a wrestler. He caught the fleetest horse for sport, and at ten years old was the prime wrestler of Samengan. Tehmina was proud of her son, and dreaded the day when his father should send for him to make him a Persian warrior. Accordingly, when Rustem inquired about the child, she replied that it was a girl, and so she was enabled to keep Sohrab a little longer.

One day, however, he pressed her to tell him who was his father. "Rustem is thy sire," she proudly said, "and God, in all Creation, made but one hero like Rustem."

Tehmina showed him Rustem's letter and the presents he had given her, and the boy, enraptured with the stories of his great ancestors, San and Zal, desired to see Rustem forthwith. "Do not let King Afrasiab know who you are, for he would kill you in his hatred of your father. And, on the other hand, if Rustem knew how much you were grown he would take you from me and I should lose all the joy of my life."

"It is vain," said Sohrab, "to ask me not to speak my father's name! And as to his foes, it is

my place to fight them by my father's side. I will gather a countless army and fight Kous of Persia, and make Rustem king, and you, dear mother, its glorious queen. This done, Afrasiab is of no account, as the stars fade away when the sun and moon make bright the day."

He continued, "Since I am Rustem's son, there must be no kings but he and I. But, first, I must find a horse."

The sorrowing mother, seeing his course as true as that of a rising star, ordered the stables to be opened; and, after testing the horses, Sohrab at last found a foal of Raksh. This he mounted. The king, his grandfather, was delighted to see the boy wield the lance on horseback, and gave him a helmet from Greece, also camels, gold, and a numerous army.

It was told Afrasiab that Sohrab designed to attack Persia, and, immediately, the wily monarch saw an opportunity of striking a fell blow at Rustem's power. Thus he addressed his councillors of war, "We must not let Sohrab and Rustem know each other, and, when the battle is arrayed, they two will fight. Perchance the son will kill the father, then it will be easy to dispose of Sohrab. But if Rustem kills his unknown son, the horror of the deed will, when known, unnerve him for ever for the fight."

The embassy from Afrasiab to Sohrab took ten camels and noble steeds laden with priceless gifts, a crown, a throne, and a letter. "Seeing that fair

Persia calls thee to conquer her, receive from my legions this army. May my chiefs place on thy head the Persian crown!"

Sohrab believed the king's words, and set out towards Persia. His mother's brother, Zendeh, went with him, for Tehmina had said, "Go and shield my boy, and, when the time comes, make known to him which of the Persians is Rustem, for you know his father."

They reached a great fortress known as the White Fort. Its governor was an old man, but its champion, Hedjir, essayed to fight Sohrab, who replied to him, "Art thou then able to conquer the crocodile?"

"Come near," boasted Hedjir, "and thy head shall delight the great Kous, while thy bones shall bleach in the desert."

Smiling, Sohrab rode up, and Hedjir's spear struck his leather girdle without piercing it. He struck the champion with the shaft of his lance and the Persian staggered to the ground. Quickly Sohrab dismounted and stood on his breast with falchion drawn, when Hedjir begged his life. This Sohrab granted and sent him in chains to the king.

The old keeper of the fort had a daughter, Gurdafurd, a beautiful maid, as strong and fearless as a warrior; and when she saw the champion overthrown she tucked her hair tightly under a helmet, armed herself, and rode out against the Tartars. No one took up her challenge, and Sohrab said, "Here is another deer running to the hunt," for he

could not tell that she was a woman. She saw the noose poised in his hand, but so quickly her arrows sped that he dropped the lasso and wielded his shield, while in terrible anger he charged upon her. Gurdafurd then urged her steed across his path and with levelled lance attacked his flank. He reined in his horse in time to parry the blow. Then, leaning backwards, with all his gathered strength he threw a javelin which pierced her girdle and turned aside along her smooth armour. The shock of the blow almost threw her to the ground, but she cut the spear in two, drew out the javelin head, and once more spurred her horse on Sohrab. Sohrab now struck off her helmet, and, when her hair fell down, he saw for the first time that she was a girl. "If the maids of Persia fight like this," said Sohrab, "what must be the bravery of the men?" Throw-ing his noose round her he continued, "You cannot hope to escape. Why did you come into the fight?"

Gurdafurd to this replied, "Both armies see my flowing hair and will ask, 'How is Sohrab glorious in that he has conquered a woman?' Loose me and let us say nothing of this conflict. The White Fort, its treasure, its soldiers, all are yours when you like to take them."

"Do not break your promise," said Sohrab, "nor trust to your high walls, for I will soon level them to the earth."

She gained the gate; Sohrab followed entranced by her beauty. Her father clasped her in his arms

and said, "Thank God that mighty youth did not kill you! Yet we are by no means ashamed of your bravery and skill: you have done well."

In the evening, Gurdafurd was standing on the wall, and, seeing Sohrab waiting below, said, "Why not return, oh lord of the Tartars, and cease thy useless watch?"

"Oh beauteous tyrant," replied he, "will not sorrow enter your heart when you are captured among these ruined walls?"

With a merry laugh she answered, "Go, sweet boy, before Rustem comes it were a pity to make thee food for the eagle."

Sohrab burned with shame, and vowed to raze the fort at daybreak, then rode off to join his army.

The governor of the fort feared his vow, and in the darkness sent a swift messenger to Kaikous saying, "May the smile of Heaven illumine thy path for ever! This day a Tartar host has entered thy fair land and ruthlessly advances. The youthful commander is of giant strength and build. His name is Sohrab, and of no one he reminds me more than San or the fearless Rustem. The bold Hedjir he placed in captive chains, and thousands of his warriors besiege our fortress-wall."

"Hasten, then, the gathering of thy army. Send for Rustem. He alone can deal with this sun-like warrior. Meanwhile, our only hope is flight"

After holding a short council, the governor, the warriors, and the girl silently departed through secret paths under the ground.

Sohrab thought of the beautiful maid, for he loved her.

Arising at daybreak he led his forces against the fort, but to his amazement the gates opened to him and there was no one to be seen. He was keenly disappointed, and, in spite of his chiefs' cheerful talk of mighty enterprise, when he reflected that Gurdafurd also was lost to him, a tear came into his eye.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Rustem hears of the Tartar Warrior—The Quarrel with Kaikous—Spying on the Tartars—The Camp.

KAIKOUS was sitting on his ivory throne when the messenger from the White Fort arrived. He read the dismal news to his chiefs. Ferbad, Gudarz, Gıw, and Tus, four of those who went hunting with Rustem in Afrasiab's ground, offered their advice to the king, and all agreed to send at once for Rustem.

A writer was summoned, and the king gave him a sheet scented with amber, saying, "Sit and write a letter to Rustem." The scribe wrote as follows :

"It is thy prowess which maintains the glory of our throne. Behold, once more the Tartar tribes invade, and yet again thy succour is sorely needed. The aggressor is a marvellous youth, the pride of those savage hordes. He has defeated Hedjir, and laid low the White Fort. He wastes the land as a herd of elephants trample the cornfields. Mazanderan's king and the Genii thy mighty valour knew. Thy golden mace puts to flight the sun. Fly, then, to help thy helpless land and heed thy sovereign's prayer."

Affixing the royal seal to the scroll, the king said

to Giw, "Go, gird thy swiftest steed. I need not tell thee haste. Stay not the night with Rustem. Hasten back. Should he be gathering a rose when thou reachest Zabul, he must not stop to smell it."

The warrior, Giw, neither ate nor slept before he arrived at Rustem's palace. The sentinel said of him to Rustem, "From Persia rides a warrior outstripping the tempest."

The champion was giving justice among his people, but assembled his chiefs and rode to meet Giw, who handed him the letter and afterwards told him much more about the Tartar warrior. Rustem was amazed and thought, "Now if this hero had been a Persian, instead of a Tartar, it were possible that he should resemble Nariman or San. They say he is like me. He cannot be my son. At Samengan, Tehmina bore me a daughter!" To Giw he said, "Why do you tremble on account of this invader? Let us join the feast and think of battle plans another day. As for the fire of this young hero, it will soon be quenched when the ocean rolls in upon it."

In a short time Giw again told Rustem how urgent the matter was, but he replied, "Come, the red wine will moisten our parched lips, and merry songs cheer our hearts."

So, disregarding the king's command, they feasted for four days. Then Giw made ready to return.

"The king's anger will be raised," he said, but Rustem answered, "No man dare show me his wrath," and he saddled Raksh.

The clink of goblets and twang of harps no longer enlivened the air, but the prancing steeds shook their gilded trappings, and sparkling banners waved in the winds which carried afar the trumpets' cheery call.

As they neared the king's palace, Tus and Gudarz met them and conducted the Buckler of Persia to the monarch. Kous turned away from their homage in a towering rage. "How long has Rustem dared to disobey my command? Had I a sword, this moment his head should roll on the ground as a man cuts an orange. Lead him to the gallows and there hang him alive!"

Giw was astounded at the king's words, and said, "Sir, you surely would not touch Rustem!"

But this enraged the king the more, and, turning to Tus, he angrily cried as he left the throne, "Take both, and break their bones to pieces."

Tus was going to lead Rustem away to save him from the king's rage, but Rustem knocked his arm down so fiercely that Tus fell, and, stepping across him, Rustem strode towards Raksh. And to the king he said, "Save your gallows for the Tartar, if you can capture him! Why should I fear the king, and such a king! Go yourself and take Sohrab, break his bones on the tree with your own feeble arms! I might have had the sceptre in my hand if I had wished it so; but, true to right and custom, I found Kaikobad on Elburz, from whom the crown descends to you. Where would be your kingship had the White Genius prevailed?"

And to his friends, the Persian nobles, he said, "You know the fame of the dreadful Sohrab ! He is coming, and if you are wise you will save your lives. But Persia shall see me no more."

The nobles were dismayed as Raksh scoured the distant plain, and looked to Gudarz, the old and wise, to calm the frenzy of the king and soothe the insulted champion.

"O king, what has Rustem done to merit such disgrace ? Such thoughts are too mean for a king's heart ! Who saved thee in Mazanderan ? How many Demons escaped his powerful hand ? For this, is his reward to be death ? Reflect that angry words are never words of sense, and therefore only the mildness of wisdom truly fits the speech of a king."

"Your words are true," replied the king. "A monarch's words should shine with discretion. Go to the enraged champion, and speak fair to him that he may forget my rage."

Gudarz, followed by other nobles, overtook Rustem and said, "The wrathful king soon repents, and is grieved that he has given thee pain. Yet, though his fury was undeserved, Persia has not offended thee !"

Rustem answered, "I care nothing for the king of Persia. I, too, am a king ; my saddle is my throne, and my cuirass is my robe."

To this Gudarz replied, "Very well ; but when the nobles think that Rustem is afraid, they will all leave the land to become a hunting-ground

for the Tartars—the land that Rustem has often saved."

"No one knows better than you that my heart has no fear," said the chief. "The king scorned me, it is true, but Persia is in sore need of warriors."

So Rustem turned the head of Raksh and went back to the king, who leapt from the throne with joy: "O Champion, when in anger thou departedst, my mouth was filled with ashes, and my heart grew as slender as the new moon. Again enjoy my gratitude, and still be my glory."

"O king, the source of honour, I am here to do thy will!" said Rustem.

Kous said, "The feast invites us now: to-morrow we will see to our armies."

Kaikous made Rustem commander of all the Persians. That night Rustem said to the king, "Before to-morrow's battle I should like to see this champion for myself; therefore, permit me to go without my well-known armour into the Tartar camp."

The king rejoined, "That task is thine alone, thou favoured one of Heaven."

So Rustem dressed as a Tartar, and, under cover of darkness, penetrated the enemy's lines, and shortly stood near the door of the palace. A glorious sight dazzled his eyes. He himself would have been proud of the warriors round the festive board, but of their youthful leader he could not think without the greatest admiration and wonder.

It happened that Zendeh, the uncle of Sohrab, to

whose care Tehmina had given her boy, retired from the table, and came close to the hiding-place of Rustem. Astonished at the size of the crouching man, he said, "Who is this that fears the light?" Rustem, without speaking, struck him on the back of the neck, and Zendeh never more joined either feast or fight.

There was now no friend to bring together in lovely peace the champions of the world. Zendeh died without a word, by the hand of him whom most he wished to see.

Sohrab had noticed Zendeh's absence, and those who went to find him reported with horror that he was dead by the door. Calling his chiefs, Sohrab mourned over Zendeh, saying, "We have dogs and shepherds, yet the wolf has entered and taken the pick of the flock. Let us sharpen to-night the swords and lances, and to-morrow we will take vengeance on the Persians for the death of Zendeh." With this vow he called his warriors from mourning, lest they dwelt upon their woe, and the feast was then resumed.

Rustem, reflecting on the likeness between Sohrab and San, had reached the Persian outpost. Giw, the sentinel, saw his approach, and was about to spring upon him when Rustem spoke "Surrounded by chiefs this marvellous champion sits. He might be San returned to life." He went on to describe the meeting with Zendeh, then returned to his pavilion.

As soon as the sky laid aside its robe of black,

Sohrab put on his ample armour. Eager to begin the fight, he coiled his lasso, which in his hands was as fatal as a sword. His horse caught the master's spirit and pawed the ground impatiently, while Sohrab fastened the clasps of his helmet. Next, he climbed to a pinnacle on the fortress and beckoned Hedjir to him, for the captive was a Persian, and Sohrab desired news of Rustem.

At harvest time, when the traveller sees the reapers cut the rich man's fruitful corn, a broad band of stubble separates the waving wealth, and soon the gleaners strip it bare. So to these watchers seemed the warlike plain, as the sun's majestic rays lit up the gems displayed on royal tents of either side, and the morning winds tossed the banner folds and roused the chasing curves in a thousand streamers, extending from the tent domes. And in the narrow swath, that ribbon of sand between the foes, how many fatal conflicts were soon to take place !

Sohrab noticed each Persian leader's pavilion standing high above the tents of his chiefs, and spoke to Hedjir: "Would you gain your freedom, and even become my friend, answer me truly all that I ask. If you lie, you shall be cast into the dungeon."

"Why should I hide the truth?" said Hedjir; "thy wishes are obeyed."

"Who are Persia's mighty men? Where do they command? Where shall Kous issue forth, and Tus, Gudarz, and Giw? And where is the

valiant Rustem? Do you not know them? Speak, man!

"I see in the centre a tent of leopard skin with embroidered tapestry and gems. A hundred elephants are tied to the pegs. A throne is within the dome, and the early sun glitters back from the sapphires. On the banners suns of gold shine and overhead waves a violet flag. Whose tent is this?"

"The royal Kous holds council in that tent," said Hedjir.

"Round the next pavilion many chiefs are collecting. There is an elephant worked on the flag. Whose is that?"

"Those banners betoken Tus, the son of a former Persian king, and friend of all the brave," replied the captive.

"Farther away," continued Sohrab, "is a crimson tent and frowning spearmen stand around. What a terrible band of tried warriors!"

"The ancient Gudarz, chief councillor of the king, flies his lion-banners above the crimson cloth. Though old, he would not remain away from the battle, so stout is his martial spirit."

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

“Tell me which is Rustem?”—The Challenge—Sohrab meets his Father—The Fight.

“NEXT tell me,” said Sohrab, “whose is the green tent? Worked on his standard is a terrible dragon which seems almost to leap upon the foe, and a lion’s head marks his spear. I see the warrior on his throne, and while sitting he is taller than his soldiers. Such arms, so proud a head! Hark! could that fearful noise be the neighing of his monstrous horse? I have never seen a man or a horse to equal these!”

Hedjir did not at once reply. Little did the captive guess the fate which hung upon his word at that moment, and Zendeh was no more, to mark out the hero’s father from the mighty ones.

Hedjir thought, “This young champion will steal upon Rustem unawares if he knows his tent,” so he said to Sohrab, “That is a friend of the king, who has hurried from China.”

“But what is his name?” demanded Sohrab.

“When he arrived I was in the fort, so I do not know,” replied Hedjir.

Sohrab thought of all that Tehmina, his mother,

had said of Rustem, his horse Raksh, and his armour. Here were all the signs, yet Hedjir denied that they were Rustem's. Sohrab asked again, mentioning the huge horse and the lasso which hung from its saddle, but Hedjir again said he did not know.

With anguish in his heart, Sohrab looked upon the other flank. "Whose are the silken banners with the wolves emblazoned?"

"Those brazen trumpets," said the Persian, "assemble the host of Giw, the powerful son of ancient Gudarz, and my brother."

"Then who sits upon that throne of ebony and ivory?" asked the disappointed youth.

"The Persian Prince."

"One more I ask. Whose banner shows the wild boar by yonder saffron tent?"

Sohrab could not find Rustem. He looked at Raksh and said to Hedjir, "Can you see no signs of Rustem? Would it be possible for Persia to go to war and Rustem not be there? You say that Rustem is to lead the Persians!"

Hedjir answered, "At this time of the year the rose-feast in Zabul begins, and it may well be that Rustem is gone thither."

"Cease these idle words," said Sohrab, "Rustem is with the host. Come, now, point him out to me and I will reward you above all your fellows."

Still Hedjir refused, but said, "The glory of Rustem is all over the world. He drives every danger from his country. If you do meet him in

the battle, you will wish him changed to a tiger, or a demon, or even a dragon, so that you might escape him, for these are gentle compared with Rustem."

Sohrab, enraged, replied, "Why do you tell me the glories of Rustem? His may be the flame of wrath, but what flame lives in the mountain torrent?"

Hedjir was afraid for Rustem, and, not knowing that Sohrab was his son, went on, "Why do you ask where Rustem is? He will find you all too soon. Kill me if you like. Strike, for Rustem sees you not"

The unhappy Sohrab came down from the walls of the fort weary of the fruitless search for his father, and turned his mind to thoughts of conquest. He remembered Zendeh and hastened to make good his vow. He put on his jointed armour, and, with gleaming javelin in hand, he guided the dashing steed across the vacant plain. His cheeks glowed, his eyes shone, as he rode straight into the midst of the Persian host. Chief after chief he passed, and all gave way, like wild asses from a lion's claws, until he halted by the king's tent.

Sohrab challenged the king to combat, "Why are you called Kaikous, the king, seeing that you are afraid to fight? What kingly task have you performed? Why have you pitched your tent in a battle-field yet hide away like a fox? You and your warriors are fated to die in their thousands to-day; and this lance of mine is thirsty for your

coward blood. I took an oath, O king, a just revenge to take for Zendeh's shrieking blood. My hate shall not be quenched till your life has paid the debt. Have you a champion? Where are Tus, Giw, and Gudarz; and where is the unconquered Rustem?"

No man dared answer, least of all the king, and Sohrab, with a giant's strength, coursed round the royal pavilion and threw it to the ground.

Kous felt that the end of his life had come. Himself insulted, his bodyguard paralysed with fright, he could think only of sending for Rustem. Accordingly this message was sent, "My warriors are pale with fear of this triumphant Turk, and their souls are withered that they dare not fight him."

Now Rustem had not intended to fight that day, and replied, "Wherever this empty-headed Kous goes, misfortune follows him. Moreover, other kings used to call me to the council and the feast, but when King Kous sends for me it is always to the battle. To-day some other chief must fight this Tartar, and I will take his place if he is overthrown."

Kous then sent Tus, who told Rustem all that Sohrab had done. Going to the door of his tent, he saw the spreading disorder and decided to go. Some placed the saddle on Raksh; another fastened the club to the saddle-bow, Tus ran and secured the buckles of the skin which covered the horse, and Rustem said within himself, "Whoever he be

that leads the Tartars, whether human or Demon, he has struck terror into the hearts of the stoutest Persians."

He armed himself in the leopard skin and the broad plates of iron, and round his waist shone the girdle which the king had given him. He mounted and set out, accompanied by his brother and his nobles bearing the dragon-banners aloft.

Soon he came near Sohrab. The splendid chest and limbs reminded him of the mighty San, and in his heart of hearts he loved Sohrab. Beckoning, he said, "Come over towards me and I will leave my soldiers and meet you."

Sohrab joyfully rushed from his line, saying, "Let us two fight apart from our soldiers, and let us call no one to our aid! You are brave and tall, yet you bear the burden of years. It cannot be otherwise than that I should conquer."

Rustem, with pity in his eyes, looked on the young man and said, "Why do you boast to me? How many battle-fields have you seen? I am, as you say, old, therefore I am a practised warrior. The White Demon and all his hosts fell to my sword, and no living thing can escape me. But earth is cold. Sweet and pleasing is the healthful air. Wherefore shouldst thou seek thy grave, tender youth that thou art? No Persian youth compares to thee, why shouldst thou be slain? I should be loth to harm you. Leave the Tartars, come to my palace, be my son, and win glory beneath my banners."

As Sohrab heard the generous words spoken without the slightest boast, he felt sure that the majestic form of Rustem stood before him, like a lonely tower in the desert. When he marked the gray hairs streaking the raven black, he hoped his search was ended. Running forward he knelt down at Rustem's knees and clasped his hand in his own, and said, "By the truth which the warrior owes to his kind, art thou not Rustem, the son of White-haired Zal?"

Rustem turned his glance aside and distrust filled his mind. He thought, "What has this fox in his head? If I tell him I am Rustem he will gain glory from this meeting. He will not join me neither will he fight; then, when he returns to the distant lands of Tartary, he will boast at the feast, saying, 'In the camp by the river Oxus in my first youth, I challenged the Persians. But Rustem only could be found to answer, and he and I gave gifts; and we, the equal champions of the world, parted at peace.' And then his nobles will applaud, and through me all the Persian heroes will be shamed." Again he turned to the kneeling youth, "I am not Rustem. I have no claim to merit such as his. If you saw Rustem's face you would fly. I have come out to take your challenge, and, boastful boy, you must yield to me or, ere long, your bones shall lie bleaching in the desert wind."

Sohrab sprang to his feet, his heart full of heaviness and wonder at his mother's words. He proudly answered, "You are right to say that if

Rustem were here there would be no combat, but you have come out instead, and you try to frighten me as if I were a girl. We cannot foretell the victory. It sways this way and that like a twig on the river wave, and at last rests on one side or the other”

The combat began, in a narrow space. Rustem shook his lance and they attacked with that weapon. Loud were the incessant clangs on the shields, and soon the iron tips of the lances were worn off by the force of the blows. Throwing the remains into the sand, they drew their Indian swords. The harness of the horses was cut into pieces, their mail was torn, and soon their swords were like great saws, so hacked were the edges. Discarding these useless weapons, each seized his club. Terrible were the blows. Blood and sweat poured on to the ground, and at length neither could continue the struggle. They lay on the ground panting for breath, their throats parched with the heat.

Strange that each had neglected the kindly feeling which suffused his heart on sight of the other! The beasts of the field know their kind, but how great can be human fury when it hides the father from the son!

A while they stood breathing, and Rustem said to himself, “The struggle with the White Genius was play compared to this.”

Sohrab spoke gaily to Rustem, “Let us use our bows and arrows when you are ready.”

But their strength and rapidity were matched;

neither won the victory, and the ground was covered with the pointless feathered shafts. Next they wrestled. Rustem, whose grip could shake a mountain, was unable to stir Sohrab from the ground. Nor could Sohrab throw Rustem. They now turned to their clubs. Rustem struck one terrible stroke, but the nimble Sohrab sprang aside, and the crashing mace struck the dull earth and rebounded out of its wielder's hand. Rustem fell with the club, and Sohrab's blow bruised the champion's shoulder. Rustem reeled, stunned by the crash.

Had Sohrab desired, it would have been easy to end the strife by killing the dazed adversary with his dagger. Rustem felt, but did not betray, the pain. Sohrab smiled and taunted the old warrior, "You are not able to stand before a strong man, but it is only because you are old. You and I ought not to be matched in warfare. It is night-fall, let us begin again to-morrow. Meanwhile my sword is sharp enough for Kous to feel!"

Wheeling his horse, Sohrab rushed like a wolf upon the pavilion of Kous, and the Tartars followed. The Persians joined the battle and all was confusion. Rustem in revenge attacked Afrasiab's troops, and the dry earth lapped up the Tartar blood. But remembering how Kous was exposed in his absence, the hero turned and rode to his own army. Seeing Sohrab he cried, "Is this a truce? If still you wish to fight, fight me alone." They agreed to the truce and departed, each to his own tent.

Why do you still incline to the fight ? Let us sit peaceably together here and ask Heaven's forgiveness, and become firm friends. I am drawn to thee wonderfully. Let others fight, but we shall feast. Tell me of thy family and thy distinguished name. Art thou not the lord of Zabul, the mighty Rustem, son of White-haired Zal ? ”

But Rustem replied, “ We are not come out to feast, nor to talk, but to fight. Delay us no longer by these tricks. I am ready to wrestle. Each do his best, and leave the result in the hands of God.”

Sohrab, finding all entreaty vain, answered, “ Old man, it would be fitter for you to die quietly at home when your time is come and when your warriors attending you are prepared to honour your funeral as befits you. You reject words of wisdom, and it may be that God is about to put you into my hands. I may be the chosen instrument of fate.”

Rustem dismounted and tightened his girdle, and each secured his horse to a huge rock. They ~~wrunged~~ their wrists and tested them by bending,

Sohrab, at the feast with his chiefs, said, ‘ The old warrior has the might and carriage of Rustem, and my heart warms to him. God forbid I should fight against my father.’ ”

He spoke to one of the councillors to whom Afrasiab had said, “ This young lion must not know that Rustem is his father, so that we shall easily be rid of the pair of them.” And he replied to Sohrab, falsely, “ I know Rustem well, and his horse Raksh I have seen in battle. Although this hero and his

neither won the victory, and the ground was covered with the pointless feathered shafts. Next they wrestled. Rustem, whose grip could shake a mountain, was unable to stir Sohrab from the ground. Nor could Sohrab throw Rustem. They now turned to their clubs. Rustem struck one terrible stroke, but the nimble Sohrab sprang aside, and the crashing mace struck the dull earth and rebounded out of its wielder's hand. Rustem fell with the club, and Sohrab's blow bruised the champion's shoulder. Rustem reeled, stunned by the crash.

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Wheeling his horse, Sohrab ~~rushed like a wolf~~
As San, and Nariman, and the best of heroes died, so must I some day leave the flowery land and tread the cold region of death. In this world the hero has no fixed abiding place; why then is there lament for death?"

With the first streak of morning light in the skies, the champions armed and rode to the open space between the two armies. Sohrab smiled as if he were greeting a friend, and spoke to Rustem: "Have you slept well? How are you to-day?

Why do you still incline to the fight ? Let us sit peaceably together here and ask Heaven's forgiveness, and become firm friends. I am drawn to thee wonderfully. Let others fight, but we shall feast. Tell me of thy family and thy distinguished name. Art thou not the lord of Zabul, the mighty Rustem, son of White-haired Zal ? ”

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Rustem dismounted and tightened his girdle, and each secured his horse to a huge rock. They rubbed their wrists and tested them by bending, and, with furious eyes, rushed together. The veins on their arms swelled like ropes, and the sinews were as bands of steel. They seized each other, and struck hard, fast, and furiously. So they fought and wrestled from sunrise to noon-tide and on till the evening ; the blood and sweat covered them, the conflict not ceasing for an instant. At last Sohrab sprang back, clapped his hands, and rushed on Rustem like a lion or a wild elephant. With a safe hold he caught the royal girdle, and by a

tremendous effort raised Rustem from the ground. The aged champion felt his nerves yield, and he was dashed to the earth, his face and mouth covered with dust. Sohrab leapt upon him as the lion does upon the wild ass, and drew his sword to strike off his head. But Rustem quickly spoke. He thought of a plan to save his life. "Stay thy hand a moment! Are not our martial rules known in Tartary? A chief may be thrown once and not earn the fatal blow which is due when he is twice thrown"

Sohrab believed Rustem's words, and sheathed the sword. Again Rustem was free, and Sohrab ran from the field to his tent without another thought of the terrible combat.

One of Afrasiab's councillors, hearing Sohrab's story that night, was astounded to learn that Rustem was still alive, and grew angry with the youthful champion as he related how he had let Rustem go. "You must be tired of life," said he, "to trap a lion and let him escape alive! You had best watch him well when next you fight. Never delay the final stroke. Have you never heard the wise words of a renowned warrior, 'Never calculate upon the weakness of the least of your enemies'?—and this enemy of yours is by no means the weakest you could find."

Sohrab was grieved to hear these words, but bravely he answered, "To-morrow we shall fight again, and doubtless, as I have been gaining upon him these two days, I shall again place him under my power." And he went to his tent to sleep.

The words which this councillor had spoken were of such wisdom that experienced warriors all the world over knew them and treasured the advice they contained. They were, indeed, first spoken to Rustem by Zal in the days when the white-haired champion of the world trained his son in warlike arts. And now a stranger was teaching them to the unknown grandson.

Rustem, when he was released, watched Sohrab running like the wind to his tent, then he turned towards a stream and drank till his thirst was quenched, and purified his hands, face, and body. At night he prayed to Heaven that God would make him the victor. But he knew not what his prayer meant. It is said that in his early manhood Rustem was gifted with such prodigious strength that when he stepped upon a rock his foot crushed it down to the centre. At that time he prayed that God would decrease his strength to a more convenient extent, and the Almighty received the prayer. But now that his life was threatened and while he feared the strength of Sohrab, he prayed that the full power with which he was first endowed might be restored to him. And the second time he did not know the meaning of his prayer.

He found an answer in his strengthening limbs, and again he felt as strong as when the White Genius was alive and his Seven Adventures lay before him. Yet his face did not brighten, nor was his pride restored.

When next they met, Sohrab's face shone with

admiration for the restored hero, and in cheerful surprise he cried, " You have, then, come again to oppose me ! Or is it that you think it is time to die, and you seek eternal rest from the shaft of a bold foeman ? You care not for my words of truth, old man, and even now you may be thinking of some further device Twice I have respected your great age, and twice my heart has softened to you."

Rustem waved these words aside, saying, " Youth is proud. No warrior would boast like that. But what else can one expect from a dweller among Afrasiab's dancing-girls ! My aged arm may still prove able to vanquish your soaring spirit."

Dismounting, they glared at one another, and rushed to begin the fight. So fiercely they struggled, they did not see that Heaven itself refused to watch. A darkness spread around The foes in either camp heard the sounds of terrific blows such as woodmen deal upon huge beams of trees. The rising sand scattered by their nimble feet, soared above their heads and joined the lowering cloud, and the sun was hid. They tugged and bent and twisted and strained. Suddenly Rustem encircled the youth and bent his head far back and threw him on the ground.

Following fast upon him, he drew his dagger and thrust it into Sohrab's side.

Raksh neighed ; a cry unearthly, which made the very river tremble as it flowed.

Rustem stood, regarding the dying youth ; and the whirling sand subsided and the light of heaven

shone forth; and the two camps knew the end of the fight.

Fate is thirsty for the blood of the blood-thirsty, and even the hairs of his body shall be as daggers in the hand of Destiny, when the time is due.

The victor spoke: "Sohrab, this day you thought to strip the glory of a Persian chief, and cheer Afrasiab with the trophies, or perhaps, that Rustem himself would come to fight you, and your smooth words would win a gift which would be shown to Tartar soldiers as a proof of your valour by the Oxus. But you are slain by a man unknown, and your friends have less comfort from you than the wild beast shall have." So burned out Rustem's pride of conquest.

Fearlessly Sohrab replied: "Hold thy boast and cease thy pride. Thou hast been but the instrument of Fate, and the fault is mine alone. Would that I had seen my father before my life were o'er! No more shall my soul feast on the stories of his glory. My mother told me the signs whereby to know him, and in my search I have, luckless, died! And thou; thou boastest. But thy boast is brief, for, proud man, shouldst thou become a fish in the sea, or mount the stars in the sky, thou shalt not escape the wrath of the avenging Rustem!"

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Father and Son—Peace—The Funeral at Sistan.

A DEATHLIKE horror covered Rustem's mind, and for a time the world faded from his senses, and with pallid face and tearless eyes he swooned in anguish on the sand. At length he rose, a painful frenzy in his face, and cried, "What dost thou know of Rustem? What marks hast thou to prove thee his?" And, as he looked, a piercing groan escaped the lips of Rustem.

Sohrab mournfully, yet proudly, answered, "I am Rustem's son. My mother is Tehmina; she sits alone, vainly waiting my return to the palace of Samengan."

In his agony of doubt Rustem fell to the ground. When he recovered, he said, "Show me proof that Rustem is thy father. For I am Rustem!"

The dying Sohrab shook with astonishment, and sadly spoke: "If then thou art Rustem, thou art a cruel man! How often did I speak to thee of peace, feeling within something that forbade me fight with thee. Yet thou wouldest not agree. A strange father, thou, that knowest no tenderness towards his son! Unclasp my armour and strip

bare my arms. There look, and disperse thy doubts that I am Rustem's son. When the brazen drums were beating, my mother clasped me to her heaving bosom, and, amid her tears, fixed on my arm the bracelet of Rustem. She said, 'Wear this on thy arm as thy valiant father wore it. It is the sign of Rustem's son, and will be thy glory when the time comes.' And now I meet my father, only to die before his eyes."

Rustem tore aside the coat of mail, and saw once more the onyx bracelet he had given to Tehmina, saying, "If our child is a girl, place this in her hair; but if God gives us a boy, let him wear this on his arm, it will give him the power of the mighty San." Also, near the shoulder, was the Simorg lightly limned in points of vermillion—the Simorg, who had reared the helpless baby, Zal, on Mount Elburz.

The distracted Rustem tore his clothes in despair, and heaped the dust upon his head: and the sun went down. He cried, "My son! My son! Slain by my hand, and torn from the earth!"

Sohrab turned and crawled to Rustem's side, flung his arms round his neck and kissed him, and called him from his death-like swoon. Remembrance came again, and Rustem plucked his hair and beard, and his vast breast convulsed with pain.

He seized his sword and was about to plunge it into his heart, when Sohrab guessed the thought. "Stay," said he, "it was not you who killed me. It was Heaven's decree, and on you fell the awful

lot. But I have found my father. Come, then, and let me feel that thou art he. Take me in thy hands, let thy salt tears fall upon my cheeks, and say those words I came to hear—Call me thy son. Let that be the word as I pass away beyond the reach of words!"

The hosts looked on, and Raksh wandered over the plain. The Persians feared that Rustem was dead, and, in alarm for his throne, Kous sent to inquire as to the end of the conflict. Raksh ran with them, and came to the father and son, and, as if to join their fearful grief, mingled his tears with theirs.

Sohrab heard the noise of the moving army, and said to Rustem, "Let my life buy peace between the foes. The Tartars came at my behest when I set out in pride to find thee. I hoped to reign with thee and put all tyrants to the sword. But fate has ordered it otherwise, and my father's hands are stained with my blood."

The troops of Zabul had reached the pair and were joyful to find Rustem alive, but when they saw the strong man's tears they waited silently for him to speak, then they wept aloud.

"Let the war end now," said he. "There has been shed blood more precious than if the host were slain." Turning to his brother with a deep groan he said, "I have slain my son! Go now to the Tartar chief, and lead his army back from the Persian fields in peace."

Now the councillor of Afrasiab listened to the sad story of their champion's death, and seemed to

be sorry. He put the blame on Hedjir, saying, "He might have shown Rustem's tent to the watching Sohrab, but he denied the youth."

The brother of Rustem brought Hedjir to him, but at Sohrab's prayers he was forgiven and allowed to live.

Now Rustem bethought himself of a wonderful remedy the king possessed, and sent Gudarz to beg the royal bounty. But Kous, his heart full of malice, refused; "for," said he, "I cannot forgive the insult which that proud youth poured upon my head. He even threatened to seize my throne for Rustem. Only a fool would save the life of his enemy!"

Gudarz returned, and Rustem himself set out; but before he reached the king, his son was dead.

The unhappy man beat his breast and threw a shower of ashes on his head. "Oh, my son!" he moaned, "it had been better for me to cut off both my hands than to kill my valiant boy in the last days of my life. How shall his sorrowing mother bear the news that I have shed his blood?"

The Persians placed Sohrab on a bier, and slowly carried him off the field.

Rustem threw his spear, mace, and throne, his golden bed, and all the other signs of war into his tent, and lighted a crackling fire, which consumed them to dust and ashes.

The king now came to comfort Rustem, but Rustem disdained the pity of a man so shallow of heart.

So the two armies went their ways.

In Zabul the sad procession was led by Rustem, his head bowed down. The drums, no longer beaten, were torn, and the fragments scattered in the sand. All the chiefs marched on foot close by Rustem, and the venerable Zal heard in the distance the hum of many men approaching through the groves. He and his nobles set out to meet the solemn cortège. Beside the bier Zal and Rustem stood. "Behold my glorious boy!"

Zal stepped backwards in surprise and wept tears of blood.

Slowly they reached the palace gates, and loud was the sorrow of the aged Rudabeh.

Rustem again drew back the pall, and of those who saw the lovely youth the very ancient cried, "Of old, in this manner, did San sleep; and now sleeps Sohrab."

They wrapped him in a yellow robe, and he was buried in Sistan. A great mound of earth was raised over his grave, and from afar the traveller, seeing it, would say, "Sohrab, Rustem's son, lies there, slain unwittingly by his father."

The Tartars fastened Sohrab's armour to his warhorse and led him back to Samengan. The sad story being told to Tehmina, her grief knew no bounds. Wildly she tore her flesh and wrenched out her musky tresses.

"Friendless, and all unknown, thou hast met thy death in the clothes of war which were thy glory! Oh, why did I not march with thee to show thee thy mighty sire?"

She kissed the hoofs of his favourite steed, and clasped his armour to her breast as if it could feel her tenderness. The reins, the club, and spear she stroked, as if they were the limbs of her darling boy whom she was nursing. Day and night her grief continued, until God gave her relief, and she joined Sohrab.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

*The Tartars—Akwan Diw—Slaying the Demon—
The Son of Sohrab.*

SOME years afterwards, it came about that Rustem ruled over Tartary. It happened in this way Kaikous had a son whom Rustem taught the art of war, and when he was old enough, the Tartar Afrasiab making another descent upon Persia, he set out with the aid and advice of the Champion.

Afrasiab, warned in a dream, withdrew his troops, and the prince made peace with great advantage to Persia.

But Kous was angry and sent Tus to command the army, upon which the prince made friends with Afrasiab and lived in Tartary; and Rustem, disgusted, left the court of the Empty-headed King, as men called Kous, and retired to Sistan.

A courtier made mischief between Afrasiab and the prince, and the Tartars put him to death. His wife, who was Afrasiab's daughter, escaped with his son, and Rustem invaded the land, driving all the Tartars back into China. He then ruled the country with great severity, for seven years, after which he took most of the treasures into Persia.

The prince's son, Kaikosroo, was brought to Persia by Giw, who met him sitting by a fountain.

Kous sent Kaikosroo to attack a fortress, and when he returned victorious, made him prince and promised him the crown.

Afrasiab's eyes turned to Persia yet again, and he bought help from India and China. Again he offered his daughter and a half of his kingdom to whoever should conquer Rustem; but each of the aspirants fought in vain.

After a fight between two champions, Rustem advanced on foot, with his bow and a few arrows in his belt.

"Who are you?" said the Tartar. "Why do you come here without armour?"

"I am a warrior sent by Tus," said Rustem, "to take your horse. And for armour see my bow and arrows."

He drew the bow, fitted an arrow, and the horse fell.

The Tartar angrily returned a storm of shafts, then Rustem placed another arrow on his bow-string of elk-skin. After Rustem returned to his army, the chief ordered the dead body of the Tartar to be brought, and when the arrow was drawn out it was seen to be wet with blood on the feathered end, and all marvelled at the strength of the Champion.

Another Tartar was fleeing, when, setting spurs to Raksh, Rustem overtook the horse. Seizing the animal by the tail he shook the Tartar out of the saddle.

In another conflict, a lasso settled on the neck of Raksh, and Rustem thought for a moment his horse and faithful companion would be killed. Quickly he seized the rope and pulled, while the Tartar pulled at the other end. But the rope broke in the middle and the Tartar fell back. Rustem picked up his own lasso and threw it round him, he drew tight the noose and carried his prisoner to the king.

Afrasiab's chief councillor came forward, not to fight but to ask terms for peace. Rustem would not answer him, but sent for a wise old warrior who had been kind to Kaikosroo and his mother. But the Tartars would not agree to the terms, and in their pride scorned the wise man's words.

“The best way to conquer Rustem,” said one of them, “is to attack him one after another.” Accordingly the speaker made the first attempt, and Rustem struck him off his horse with his spear; but before he could draw his dagger, this boaster had run back to the line. A battle followed, and Rustem demanded the crown and throne of the chief, who had come from China. The chief, seated on his white elephant, said he was not an enemy of Rustem; but this deceived no one. Rustem, throwing his noose, pulled him down from his elephant; and taking his crown and throne, sent them with a message to Kaikosroo.

The Tartars fled from the boundaries of Persia, and peace lasted for several years.

Rustem returned to Sistan loaded with honours from the king, and with the blessings of his country.

Soon afterwards, a peasant, terrified by the appearance of a fierce wild ass, told the king what harm it had done to his herds, and in the end Rustem was sent for, to cope with it. For three days the hero sought it in vain, and on the fourth he threw his noose; but the animal vanished from sight. Rustem exclaimed, "This is nothing less than the Demon, Akwan Diw, and I must use either my dagger or sword." But when he lifted his sword against the ass, it disappeared again; and thus Rustem fought a shadow for three days and nights. At length he went to sleep near a fountain, while Raksh was cropping the grass. Akwan Diw, seeing him, rushed like the wind to the spot and dug up a deep trench round the hero. Then, taking up the whole mound on which Rustem was sleeping, he carried it and Rustem on his head. In a short time Rustem awoke, feeling the motion, and the Genius said, "O captive warrior, what dost thou wish? Wouldst thou be thrown into the sea or left upon the mountain?"

Rustem considered what he should do, and remembered that, with the magicians, it was the custom to go by contraries. He would rather be thrown into the sea than be abandoned on the barren height, so he said, "Oh, do not cast me in the swelling waves; it is not a fit death to be eaten by a fish. Carry me to the mountain. There I may be devoured by the lion and perchance a bone will be left of me, but nothing is saved from the sea."

Akwan Diw lifted him up and flung him from

the height into the roaring seas. A sea beast quickly came to devour him, but Rustem severed the head with his sword. The blood of another sea-crocodile stained the waves, and Rustem swam to the shore and praised God for his protection.

He walked to the fountain, but Raksh had gone, and later was found among one of Afrasiab's herds.

Rustem caught him and mounted, and thought of driving the whole herd to Kaikosroo. The keepers heard the tramping, and attacked Rustem, who turned round, saying, "Would you attack Rustem, after he has defeated Afrasiab ?" They fled at once.

Now at this time of the year the Tartar king visited his horse farms ; and so Afrasiab met Rustem, but was forced to fly. Thus Rustem drove a herd of noble horses and four war elephants to Kaikosroo.

On his way he found Akwan Diw, who said, " Do you think you are made of iron, or brass, or stone, that you come again near me ? "

But Rustem did not answer with words. He threw his lasso and entangled the Demon. Then he struck off the monstrous head and sent it to the king, who was amazed at its hideous aspect and size.

Rustem stayed at the royal palace a few days during the feast and then departed to Zabul.

Nothing could wash away the hatred of Afrasiab towards Rustem, and he was delighted one day to find that a peasant woman had reared a wonderful child of great size and strength. The king sent

for him and asked who he was. "I live in a village," replied the young man, "and my mother will not tell me the name of my father."

Afrasiab then said, "I have a great enemy whom I cannot overcome, but I am sure that you could match him."

"Why do you trouble about a single man?" asked the youth, whose name was Barzu.

"Because he is more powerful than three hundred," answered the king, and he gave presents to Barzu and had him trained in warlike arts.

"Oh, my son," said his mother, "these gifts are as a price for thy life, and these suits of armour are as winding sheets in my eyes."

Nevertheless, Barzu led the army against Persia, and so terrible was his challenge that the Persian warriors fled, Tus and another being captured.

Rustem was sent for, and at night he spied in the Tartar camp and regained the two captives.

This news made Afrasiab fear, for he guessed that Rustem was the deliverer. Next day, Barzu called Rustem out to fight. He came, and the fight began with the bow and arrow. Then they used their maces till these were shattered. After this they wrestled, but to no purpose. Suddenly Barzu picked up his mace and smote Rustem on the head, so that the champion felt that a huge rock had fallen on him, and one arm was hurt. Rustem betrayed no pain, and Barzu exclaimed, "That blow would have shattered a mountain!"

They agreed to fight the next day, and withdrew.

In the tent Rustem examined his wounded arm and decided to go to Sistan to be healed.

On the morrow a friend of Rustem came into the camp, and, after resting awhile, prepared to fight Barzu. The champion, now restored by sleep, instructed him how to manage the Tartar chief. Rushing upon him, he gave several furious blows with his battle-axe and entangled him in the noose, and took him bound to Kaikosroo.

Rustem begged his life and took him to Sistan.

Now the mother of Barzu followed her captive son, and being a friend of one of Rustem's singing girls, persuaded her to give him a file.

Before long he escaped, and the two women journeyed with him.

Rustem was returning from hunting the elk when he met them, and contended with Barzu. In the conflict the horses seemed equally determined to kill each other, and the fiery Raksh so bit and kicked Barzu's steed, that he tried to run away while Rustem was gripping his master. So Rustem had the advantage and was about to kill him when the woman cried out, "Stay, Rustem, for he is thine own kinsman. Sohrab was his father, and thou art his grandfather."

When he saw the signet ring of Sohrab, Rustem was convinced, and warmly pressed the youth to his bosom, and took him to Zal, who hailed him with joy and tenderness.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Isfendiar—Rustem insulted—Deadly Arrows—The Simorg—The Tamarisk Arrow.

THE three heroes—Zal, Rustem, and Barzu—fought side by side against the Tartar army and drove them from the country. After this Rustem withdrew from warfare, and retired to live in peace and quietness with the venerable Zal, while Barzu continued the fame of this line of heroes. Rustem was made ruler over three provinces, and Kaikosroo retired to a life of prayer. Afrasiab troubled the Persians no more.

Now the King of Persia had a brave son who had done many wonderful acts. He was very proud of slaying a Simorg, and boasted that he ought to be made king in the stead of his father.

“I have yet one enemy,” said the king, “and he is Rustem, the son of Zal. There was a time when Rustem obeyed the King of Persia, but now he refuses his aid and will not do homage. Bring him to me subdued, and I will resign my crown to you.”

The prince, Isfendiar by name, was astounded and replied, “I would rather go and capture China, or fight any other ruler in the world than Rustem,

who has been the saviour of Persia. He taught our warriors, and you yourself lived two years in his palace. How then can you turn against your benefactor?"

The king repeated his command, adding, "Bring him to me in the folds of your lasso."

Isfendiar went to his own house to ponder the command. His mother advised him not to earn the curse which overtakes the unthankful. But his word was given to the king, and he set out, taking a present to Rustem.

One of the camels lay down on the journey, and, however it was beaten, refused to go forward. Isfendiar ordered the animal to be killed, but the people shook their heads and said it boded no good.

When they neared Sistan, the eldest son of the prince went before the company, taking the present to Rustem. He, however, was not inclined to receive it, or to entertain Isfendiar. Zal counselled him to do so, saying, "We have always been loyal to this royal house. Let us now go to meet him with the honour due to his rank."

Accordingly Rustem set out, and at some distance from Isfendiar he dismounted, and walked respectfully to him. He invited the prince to enter his palace, as the king had done before.

Isfendiar replied, "I am strictly forbidden by the king to be your guest. My father has a whim to see you in fetters, and has sent me to take you to him. Therefore, allow yourself to be bound.

The chains shall not remain on your limbs for a day, and I will release you at night."

Rustem said, "I shall be shamed for ever if a prince refuse to come under my roof; accept first my invitation, then perhaps I will consider the matter of the fetters."

The prince answered, "My visit has another purpose than my father's stay with you.

"If I take your bread and salt, and you refuse to be bound, I must force you, yet how can I employ force against my host and keep my honour? Come to my tent to the feast."

"That is why," said the hero, "I cannot eat your bread and salt."

"Let us then merely drink wine," answered the prince.

Rustem agreed, and each drank his own wine. Then Rustem went to speak with Zal, and told him what charms Isfendiar possessed.

While he was absent, a warrior said to the prince, "Why did you let him go? You will never bind the descendant of San by force!"

Rustem dressed for the banquet, and sat awaiting a messenger to announce the feast. At last he went by himself and reproached Isfendiar for his bad manners; but the prince replied, "The distance was too great and it is a hot day. I would not have troubled you to come, but, since you are here, sit down and drink a cup of wine with me."

Rustem repeated Zal's invitation, but the prince

replied, "After the feast you must accompany me to the king."

Rustem then sang a song of his mighty exploits, how he had cleared the world of the enemies of the Persian kings. The prince, somewhat enraged at this, offered him a seat at his left hand.

"Never have I sat at the left hand of a king," said Rustem, as he took the right-hand place.

The prince then said, "Rustem, I have heard that your father was a child of the Demons, and that San cast him out for his ugliness, and even the Simorg refused to devour him: and that the young ones in the nest gave him the offal of the prey: and that at last San sought him and succeeded in making him something like a human being!"

This was too great an insult for Rustem to bear. He related the glories of his royal ancestors, and his wonderful deeds, and showed the prince that he could have been the King of Persia had he desired. He recounted the monarchs he had slain, and otherwise compared his deeds with those of the prince.

"Enough of this," said Isfendiar. "Let us feast now, and to-morrow I will bind thee."

Rustem was pleased when the tables were brought in, and his appetite amazed the warriors. He threw the goblets aside, demanding flagons, and emptied them one after the other.

"Consult with your father," said Isfendiar, when Rustem was returning home, "and if you consent to be bound, it is well."

"You also consult whether you will be our guest, or not: if not, we will meet in battle here before sunrise," said Rustem.

Zal asked Rustem not to fight, but he replied, "He hath scorned thee and insulted me, so that it cannot be avoided. But I wish to take him alive. I would rather serve him than kill him."

Zal hoped for a peaceful ending of the strange quarrel, and wept, but he fastened on the armour.

The troops of each side were ready for battle, but their leaders were ordered not to advance unless it was necessary. Rustem proposed to Isfendar that the armies should fight, but he refused, saying, "The quarrel is mine and yours."

They fell upon each other with spears, then with swords, and later with clubs. When these weapons were rendered useless by reason of the force of the blows, they took their lassoes. Each caught the other, but neither could pull his foe out of the saddle. The impatient troops had begun a fight, and a messenger ran to inform Isfendar that his two sons were slain. "Is this your honour?" said Isfendar. "Your chiefs have slain my two sons."

Rustem replied, "Nay, by the sun, I knew nothing of this. I will bind hand and foot the doer of this wicked thing, though he were my brother."

"That would be useless," retorted the prince. "It would not restore my sons to me. I will kill thee instead."

So taking his bow and quiver, Isfendiar discharged the arrows with the speed of lightning, and of sixty there was not one which did not wound either Rustem or Raksh, whereas the prince lost no blood whatever.

The leader of Rustem's troops, seeing Raksh limping about the field, came to assist the hero. Rustem prevented him from shooting, and said to Isfendiar, "We cannot fight in the darkness. Let us separate now, and to-morrow we will see to the matter of these fetters."

Isfendiar answered, "I am well aware that you are a sly foe, but I spare you to-night," and after Rustem had gone he went sadly to his tent, thinking of his two slain sons.

He embraced their severed heads, and placed their bodies in coffins of gold, and sent them to the king on biers of ebony. This letter he sent also, "Thy son Isfendiar lives to send thee the results of his obedience to thy royal command. Heaven only knows what to-morrow will bring forth. Meanwhile, see that thou enjoyest the glory of being the king, but reflect that thy glory will be but short-lived."

Zal, on discovering the many grievous wounds sustained by his son, said, "Woe! that in my last days I should behold so great a misfortune befall us." And he began to chafe the warrior's feet, and apply healing ointment, and bind up the gaping wounds like a skilful physician.

Rustem replied, "I have never met the like of

Isfendiar. He must be made of brass, for my arrows, which I can drive through an anvil, cannot pierce his cuirass. I thank God that the darkness came on, for soon he must have conquered me. I am unable to fight, and I would be glad to disappear out of the sight of man."

His venerable father replied, "If you abandon the contest we shall all be made slaves. But yet there is hope. The Simorg promised me he would appear to help me in any great trouble, and surely this is a case for his help."

Zal, accompanied by three magicians, each bearing a censer, climbed a high rock, and took the feather out of a pocket of costly brocade. Stirring the live coals, he placed the feather upon them. In a short time the Simorg appeared in the darkness, circling round Zal and the three men, who did homage to the wonderful Bird.

It said, "Prince, why hast thou called me?"

After duly thanking the Simorg, Zal replied, "I am in a sore strait. Rustem is almost killed; his horse is wounded to death."

"Send for the hero and his horse," said the Simorg, and, though the pain was terrible, they came.

"Do not be alarmed for them," said the Bird. He drew out the arrows from Raksh with his beak, and stroked the open wounds with his feathers, and the horse neighed. Turning to Rustem he pulled out the arrow heads which Zal had been unable to withdraw, and sucked away the sand and poisoned blood.

“Dress the wounds,” he said, “and keep out of harm’s way for seven days. Dip this feather in milk and anoint the bruises and they will heal.”

Rustem felt better already, owing to the magic influence of the Bird, and he asked further aid against Isfendiar.

“What is your quarrel with him?” inquired the Simorg, and Rustem told him the story of the insult and the fetters.

“It would be better to make peace,” said the Bird. “No more perfect warrior lives than Isfendiar, who has by some device actually killed a Simorg. Nevertheless, if he refuses your homage I will help you. Mount Raksh and follow me.”

So saying, he led them across a great river to a plantation of tamarisks. Rubbing the hero’s eyes with his feathers he said, “Take the finest branch you can see and straighten it in the fire. Fix to it a well-tempered arrow-head and feather it suitably. The tamarisk arrow never misses its aim, and you must shoot at Isfendiar’s eyes, for he who spills Isfendiar’s blood will not escape misfortune all his life.”

The next morning Rustem was on the battle-field before Isfendiar awoke, and the prince could not believe that Rustem was alive and well.

Following exactly the Bird’s commands, Rustem offered to go unfettered to the king, if the prince would feast in Zal’s palace. He also offered costly presents, but Isfendiar was obstinate. He shot an arrow at the hero, who skilfully avoided it. With

a prayer testifying his innocence, Rustem fixed the wand of tamarisk wood, and took aim: the charmed arrow carried everlasting darkness to the luckless prince.

But again was Rustem's strength his curse: for he had spilled Isfendiar's blood.

They carried him to his tent, and Zal entered with Isfendiar's nobles. "It is the opinion of the wise," said the White-haired, "that he who slays Isfendiar loses peace for ever."

Isfendiar answered, "I am slain, not by Rustem, nor yet by the Simorg, but by my father. But, Rustem, do thou take charge of my son and rear him as a king."

Rustem took a solemn oath that he would do so; and the soul of Isfendiar fled from his body.

THE LAST CHAPTER.

Birth of Shugad—Rustum Collects Tribute—Treachery—Rustum's Last Arrow.

IN Zal's old age, a son of great beauty was born to him. The astrologers foretold his character and future by means of his horoscope, and for some time hesitated to inform Zal of the awful meaning of the face of the heavens at the birth of Shugad.

They said to Zal, "The secrets of the stars are laid open to us, and we fear they are of evil tidings. Although this child is so beautiful, he will be the cause of the downfall of your house. He will bring trouble upon Persia, and as for his own life, it will not be long or sweet. Moreover, when he dies, there will be but few of his kinsmen alive."

This horrible prophecy spread terror through Sistan, and in agony Zal prayed Heaven to avert the threatened destiny.

The boy was brought up carefully, and when he was grown up, he was sent to the King of Kabul. The king, seeing that he was a tall and handsome young man and suitable in all respects to occupy a throne, treated him with distinguished kindness

after the manner of a prince, and Shugad in time married the king's daughter.

Now Kabul paid tribute to Rustem each year, being one of his provinces, and from the king he received a bull's hide as homage.

The king thought that, since he had allied his family with that of Rustem, the tribute would now be remitted, but Rustem's officers came as usual when the time was due.

The King of Kabul was therefore very angry, and Shugad was exceedingly discontented, saying, "It is true that Rustem is my elder brother, yet he scorns me like a slave. Why, then, should I respect him? I will punish him for his haughty conduct with death."

These words pleased the king, and he said, "But how will you bring this to pass?"

One night Shugad told the king his secret plan. It was this. "You must make a great feast, and call to it all your nobles. During the feast you must pretend to insult me with scornful words about Rustem and Zal. Then, seeming in a fearful rage, I will rise, leave the banquet and hasten to Sistan. I will then inform Rustem of what you have said, and he will doubtless come here to be revenged. While I am gone you must select a part of your hunting-ground and dig pits in it, big and deep enough to swallow both Rustem and Raksh. Put several swords in the pits with their handles stuck in the earth, so that the points and edges are uppermost. Then lightly cover over the pits with

slender twigs and replace the turf, and let the newly-turned earth not be seen. When Rustem returns with me, make peace with him and invite him to the hunt, leading him by way of the pits, and in one of them surely he will find his grave."

So the king held the feast as Shugad advised, and over the wine the young man began to boast of his ancestors.

Shortly the king replied, "How does it happen that you consider yourself of the same stock as San and Nariman? If it were so, surely Zal would pay you some regard, and Rustem would treat you as a son of Zal. But all the family treat you as a slave."

Instantly Shugad arose, hurried from the feast, and journeyed to Zabul.

Rustem welcomed him at the palace, and said, "How is it with thee at Kabul?"

To this the wily Shugad answered, "I am angry at the thought of Kabul. The king has heaped insults on my head. Before all his nobles he said I was no son of Zal, and even if I were it was nothing to boast of. Then I came away."

Rustem, believing all that the false brother had said, comforted him, saying, "I will go back with you and will give you his crown"

The hero then ordered his army to be got ready, but the young fox said a few horsemen would be sufficient. "The mere mention of your name," he said, "would reduce the king to a state of the greatest terror."

During this time the King of Kabul had had the pits dug, and the swords were fixed upright, and everything was cleverly but cruelly hidden.

When Rustem set out for Kabul, Shugad sent a speedy messenger to the king, saying, "Rustem is coming, but without his troops. Meet us and ask pardon of him."

So the crafty king rode towards the approaching party, and when Rustem was in sight he dismounted and walked barefoot to him, and, bowing down to the ground, begged to be forgiven.

The champion pardoned the king, and had no thought that, while the words were like oil, the heart was full of venom.

The king led the party to a beautiful garden where a feast was spread, and afterwards said, "There are lions in the hills, and in the forests are the springing deer and wild asses. Let us delight ourselves in sport."

Rustem loved to hunt, and agreed heartily with the king's proposal. His officers saddled Raksh and put his bow in its case. Rustem took his falcons, mounted, and set out.

In the chase he became separated from his companions; Shugad, however, followed him at a distance. Boldly Rustem rode on, straight towards the pits, not knowing how little of his fate was yet unfulfilled. Raksh, who could smell the newly-turned earth, sniffed with wide open nostrils and staring eyes, as if he could see the doom which awaited his master.

Rustem angrily urged him forward, but he reared: then his master threatened to use the whip, and lightly touched him.

The blow made Raksh dart forward, and he fell with two feet in one of the pits. His sides were pierced by many blades, and Rustem's breast was wounded. Still he sprang backwards from the depth, bringing Rustem with him on his back; but what was the use? They both fell into the next pit. Again and again they rose and fell until they reached the seventh pit.

Tired and bleeding, they lay on the bank, and Rustem knew that there had been treachery, and he knew the cowardly traitor's name.

When he looked up he saw the vile Shugad watching him, and he cried, "My wicked brother! Was it a task of thine to destroy my life?"

Shugad answered, "Thy time is come, and this is thy fate, for all thy bloodshed."

The king then arrived, and exclaimed in pretended alarm, "Unhappy king, that Rustem is hurt in my country! How did this occur? Bring the physicians to heal those wounds."

But Rustem was not blinded as to the falsehood of these supposed comforters. Bravely he spoke, hero to the last: "What physician can heal these wounds? My reign of conquest has outlived the reigns of many kings, and still am I unconquered! Foul treachery is this. But I shall be revenged upon the traitors."

Rustem now turned to Shugad and told him

sorrowfully that he was about to die. He requested that, as a last service, Shugad would give him his bow and two arrows, so that he could at least resemble a living man, and thus frighten away the wild beasts who would come to feast upon his body.

Shugad, joyful to think that his brother was dying, fixed the string on the bow, and put it and the arrows in Rustem's grasp. The Champion of the world exerted his great strength, and bent the bow so far back that the wretch shuddered with terror, and looked round to find a hiding-place. He ran to a plane tree, and so hoped to shield himself. But all to no purpose. Rustem placed an arrow, and drew the bow to its full. The good shaft sped through the heart of the tree and pierced the traitor. The two were transfixed by the arrow.

Rustem turned his eyes to Heaven, and prayed, "O God, I thank Thee for giving me the power, with my own hands, to revenge myself on this murderer!"

So sped Rustem's last arrow; so died Rustem.

There was mourning at Sistan when the venerable Zal buried the bones of his son Rustem, the Hero of Persia.

GLOSSARY.

armourer's wheel (25), grindstone.

astrologers (8), observers of the stars and other heavenly bodies, from the aspect of which it was supposed possible to foretell the future. Their science or art, astrology, was the beginning of astronomy.

Bazaar (16), a place where goods were shown for sale or barter; hence a row of stalls or booths: arcade, fancy fair. The meaning of this word has become specialised.

bulbul (27), nightingale: also applied to other singing birds

camphor (7), whitish substance obtained by boiling the wood of the camphor tree with water. The oil sublimes inside the dome-shaped lid of the vessel. Camphor was considered valuable by the Persians as it was imported from regions much farther east

caravan (16), travellers in company.

cargo (16), burden: now refers to shipping.

cavalcade (4), procession, mainly of horsemen: notice *cavaliere*, *cavalry*.

coffins of gold (110). At this time it was considered a pollution for dead bodies to come into contact with wood. Corpses were conveyed to a circular enclosure and exposed to the vultures, and afterwards the bones only were buried.

cortège (96), train of attendants.

cypress (10), a favourite simile spoken of beautiful Eastern women. The cypress tree is an evergreen, and is often a symbol of mourning.

Demons (4), a fabulous race also called Genu, Jinn and Jan. The Genu of the *Shah Nameh* differ considerably in attributes and limitations from the Jinn of the Arabian Nights.

Elburz (1), the "Snowdon" of Asia Minor. The Elburz range separates the arid heights from the fertile northern slopes of Mazanderan, which province has recently been occupied by Russia.

fastness (24), natural fortress.

fluted (32), ornamented with flutes or grooves.

furnished (16), refers to trappings or accoutrement, but now chiefly to domestic goods.

horoscope (114), aspect of heavens at the hour of a person's birth. Belief in fortune-telling by horoscopy still persists.

lasso (21), noose. Method of using lasso described on p. 32. Lassoes are still widely used among primitive people.

mace (4), word used for both club and mace. The latter, properly speaking, was usually of metal, and the weighted end had spikes or ribs. The mace in civilised countries is represented by the policeman's baton and official symbols of authority.

musk (6), a strong-scented substance obtained from the musk-deer: its fragrance has an exciting effect upon orientals.

(p. 10), used as a medicine. The name is applied to some plants having the same smell.

onager (59), wild ass or gor of Asia; reddish-grey in colour, with rather woolly hair; herds in Tibet.

onyx (62), a gem of quartz or of agate, with coloured veins.

presents (no particular reference). Among Persians, present-giving was an act of courtesy preliminary to negotiation. The present received by San was in no way a bribe.

raze (17), to level to the ground; cf. razor.

rose (28), attar of roses, a scent distilled from that flower.

saffron (21), a Persian plant similar to the crocus. The stigma of the saffron is of rich orange colour and yields the colouring matter.

Simorg (1). This fabulous bird is credited with more than human intelligence. It is the Persian representative of the well-known griffin.

Serpent-King (5). Zohak, the founder of the Demon race, had growing from his shoulders serpents which were fed on human flesh. He figures in the earlier portion of the *Shah Nameh*.

tamarisk (113), small tree, some varieties of which produce manna.

Turk (80), equivalent to the modern word Turcoman, a native of Central Asia.

vermilion (45), a scarlet colour obtained at one time from the kermes worm, and from mercury and sulphur.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS AND SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS AND RESEARCH.

1. Compare the weapons of a fully armed Persian warrior (1000 to 600 B.C.) with those of a modern European soldier.
2. Name other literary examples, ancient or modern, of the desertion of young children by their parents, and give briefly the reasons in each case.
3. "Partake of my bread and salt." What was the significance of this invitation in the days of chivalry?
4. Kaikobad, waiting in the garden, was probably listening to stories of his ancestors. Make up such a story, connected, for example, with San.
5. In your classical atlas take Hyrcania as Mazanderan. Draw a map showing where scenes in Rustem's life occurred. Also supply a list of flora and fauna, according to the book.
6. What is now meant by the term "a white elephant"?
7. As a soldier in Mount Sipend fortress tell the story of the death of Nariman.
8. Describe your life as a watchman of Mount Sipend.
9. The song of the Demon minstrel may be called "local patriotism." Write an account of your favourite holiday haunt as a local patriot of the place.
10. Compare Raksh with any other famous horses of legend or of history.
11. Suppose that Kaikous had taken you on the flight; describe the incidents up to the moment Rustem discovered you.
12. Compare Kaikobad and Kaikous as men, and as kings.
13. Give brief accounts of other warrior-maids, besides Gurdafird.
14. When was the Simorg's Feather used? Were there any other occasions when, you consider, it should have been used?
15. Name three poems you would describe as Epics, giving your reasons.

SUBJECTS FOR COMPOSITION IN VERSE.

- 1 Put into rhymed verse the four riddles of the wise men and their answers (ch. 11)
- 2 Write in blank verse the story of Rustem's capture of the fortress on Mount Sipend.
3. Write some verses on Rustem's horse Raksh.
- 4 Turn Rustem's address to his brother (ch. xiii.) into blank verse after the model of Matthew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum"

HELPS TO FURTHER STUDY.

A COMPLETE translation of the *Shah Nameh* was made by Jules de Mohl and issued by the Imprimerie Nationale, 1876-7: *Le Livre des Rois*, par Abou'l Kasim Firdousi.

In English, A. J. Church has given a sympathetic treatment of some passages.

Matthew Arnold treated the episode of "Sohrab and Rustum" in his poem of that title.

The first translation of the *Shah Nameh* into English was the work of James Atkinson, of the East India Company, published in London, 1832, and reprinted in the Chando Classics, 1892. It is a condensed version in prose and verse, and ought to be much better known than it is.

For a literary parallel to the episode of the flying machine (chapter ix.) read Johnson's *Rasselas*, chapter vi., and for a parallel to the conflict between Sohrab and Rustem read Virgil's account of the last conflict between Turnus and Aeneas (*Aeneid*, Book XII.).

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